The boy scouts on lost trail

Thornton Waldo Burgess, Charles S. Corson

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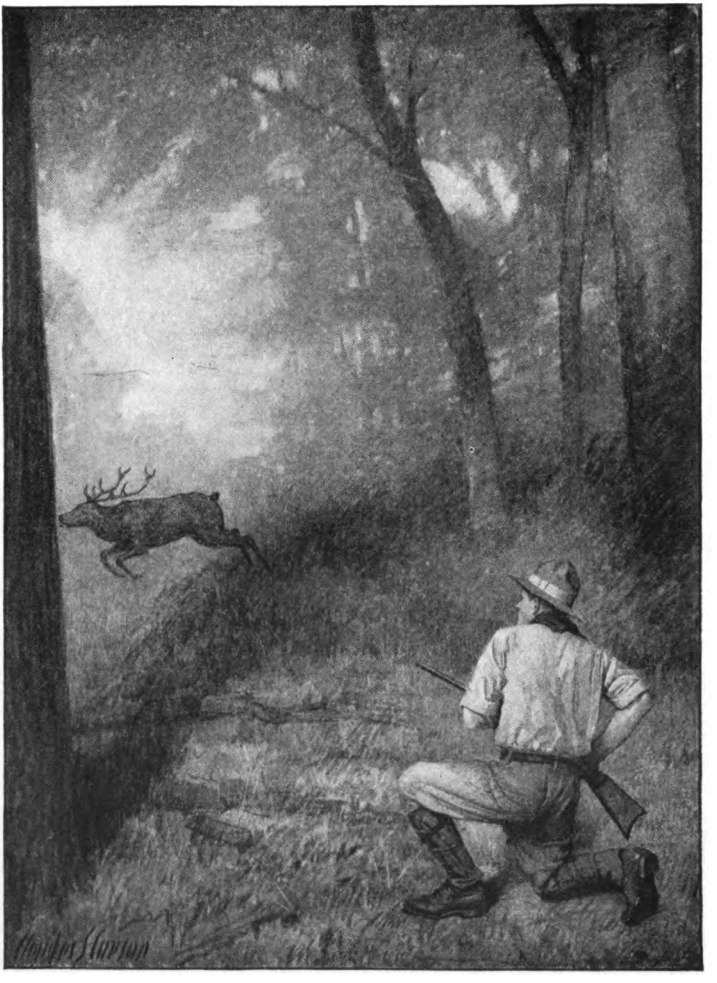

A MAGNIFICENT TEN-POINT BUCK

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The Boy Scouts

on

Lost Trail

By

Thornton W. Burgess

Author of
The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp
The Boy Scouts on Swift River
The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp

Illustrated by C. S. Corson

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To Franklin K. Mathiews

chief librarian of the Boy Scouts of America, whose criticisms and suggestions have been of the greatest help to me, as doubtless they have been to others, and whose own work for boys is not to be estimated

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Introduction

THOSE who have read "The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp," the first book in this series, will need no introduction to most of the characters of the present volume. Four of them are members of Dr. Merriam's famous vacation school in the deep woods, a camp conducted under Boy Scout law, but with tribes instead of patrols, each tribe having as chief a Scout of the first class. Three of them were principal characters in the second volume, "The Boy Scouts on Swift River." On that trip they made practical use of the things they had learned at Woodcraft Camp, and their experiences further fitted them for the severer tests, such as are necessarily entailed by an overland trip through the wilderness, such a trip as in this volume they take in their search for Lost Trail.

Every boy with good red blood in his veins is heir apparent to love of adventure. It is his birthright. In the preceding volumes and in this I have endeavored to show how Nature is ever ready to gratify this. She has seized

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upon it as one of the most powerful factors in the development of courage, self-reliance and true manliness. The great woods, the mountains, the lakes and rivers are her class-rooms, and those who seek knowledge there cannot but gain physical and moral strength.

In "The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp" and in "The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp" I tried to portray my idea of what a summer camp for boys should be. In "The Boy Scouts on Swift River" I drew from my own experience to show what average boys may find to-day of wholesome excitement, of clean living and of daily tests in moral and physical stamina by being thrown on their own resources in a vacation spent canoeing on a wilderness stream. In the present volume the tests of woodcraft and self-dependence are a little more severe, but only such as might reasonably be encountered on such a trip. There is none that Boy Scouts of the first class could not successfully meet.

The forests and the waters call; dead campfires wait to be rekindled; adventure lies along the trail. Seek them, oh, boy reader, and know the joy of true living.

THE AUTHOR.

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The Boy Scouts on Lost Trail

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

"HELLO, Hal! You look as if you had been invited to your own funeral! What's up, old Scout? No bad news from home, is there?"

Hal Harrison flung his hat on the ground with a savage gesture and then dropped down beside Walter Upton, who lay sprawled out at full length on a pile of sweet smelling balsam boughs in a little lean-to they had built in a favorite place on the edge of a setback a quarter of a mile from Woodcraft Camp. A scowl darkened the handsome face and he bit his under lip in the petulant way which had been characteristic of him when he had first entered the camp three years before, then

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a spoiled boy who all his life had been given his own way.

"It's a funeral all right, all right," he growled, "but it's yours as much as it is mine. Hang it all, it's beastly! That's what it is—beastly!"

Upton had keenly watched the flushed face of his companion as he spoke and had seen nothing of sorrow there—only anger and disappointment, so he had made up his mind that whatever the news Hal had received it was nothing really serious. Probably some cherished plan of Hal's for winning points for the Senecas in the annual field day, now less than two weeks off, had fallen through. Hal was given to occasionally "flying off the handle" over little things of this kind, and it always amused Walter, especially when it had anything to do with winning points for the tribes, for he was a Delaware himself, although Harrison's chum.

"Well," he said, yawning ostensibly as Hal continued to frown and bite his lip, "I'm waiting to be properly mournful and order the flowers. When does it come off?"

"That's the trouble; it doesn't come off.

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Oh, it's beastly!" replied Hal, kicking at an unoffending stick.

"Say, you black-headed thunder-cloud, I don't like your choice of words, and I don't like conundrums. Never could guess 'em, and don't want to try. Now spit it out: what doesn't come off—the funeral?" retorted Walter.

"No, our trip in the Maine woods," replied Hal glumly.

"What? Say that again!" Walter had come up to a sitting position with an abruptness that made Hal smile in spite of himself.

"I said that our trip to the Maine woods doesn't—come—off. It's fallen through—knocked on the head—dead—buried. Is that perfectly clear?" Hal spoke slowly and with bitter emphasis.

"Clear as mud," replied Walter. "Why doesn't it come off? Why is it dead? Who knocked it on the head? Quit biting your lip and limber up that tongue of yours before I pull it out by the roots!"

For answer Hal took a letter from his pocket and passed it to Upton. With fingers that fairly shook Walter spread it open.

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It was dated at a distant lumber camp in the Adirondacks and was as follows:

"DEAR HAL:

"Just a brief and hurried note to break bad news to you. It will be quite out of the question for me to leave here in time to take that Maine trip we have thought about and planned for so long. I know just how keenly disappointed you and Upton will be, and I am quite as much disappointed myself. You know me well enough, I think, to know that I would not willingly upset your plans. The fact is I have just been assigned to make some special investigations which will keep me here well into October, and you know a good Scout never questions orders. Incidentally if I make good on this work it will mean much to me in next year's work at college in my chosen profession.

"With best regards to Upton and yourself and a very lively hope that another year we may be able to make the Maine trip together, I am always,

"Your brother Scout,
"LOUIS WOODHULL."

Walter emitted a long whistle as he finished reading, and looked up at Hal with

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such a blank expression that the latter couldn't restrain a feeble grin.

"Well," he demanded, "how about the funeral now? You've got a face long enough for chief mourner anyway. Did you ever hear of such luck? Here we've been planning for this trip a whole year and right at the last minute Louis has to dump the fat in the fire and isn't even on hand to see it smoke. Confound his special work! I—I—I'd like to ——"

"There was a little man
Who had a little pan
And beat it with a stick to make a din, din, din.
He stubbed his little toe
And this is all I know
About the little man and piece of tin, tin, tin.

May I join this cheerful party? Of course as a good Scout I am obliged to remind you that one of the first essentials and chief virtues in a Scout is cheerfulness, and that it is his duty to be a sunshine-maker in the world. You will find it on page 9 of the manual. So here I am to cheer and be cheered, and so much obliged to you for the enthusiastic reception which you have been kind enough to give an

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humble fellow citizen working in the cause that we hold so dear to our stomachs and without which life would be so incomplete. Say, fellows, what you got to eat? You may pass it around after I have sung my famous solo:

"There was a little man
Who had a little pan
And beat it with ——"

The song ended abruptly, and the singer landed with a crash on the balsam bed of the lean-to as his feet were pulled from under him. Through all his impromptu speech his face had worn the most lugubrious expression imaginable, and now there wasn't a shadow of a smile as he looked mournfully up at the two faces, which, despite all their efforts, were forced to grin as they looked down on him.

"Say, fellers, ain't I the bully little sunshine-maker?" he persisted in a voice quite in keeping with the mournfulness of his face. "I fear I've overdone it, for I feel as if I had had a sunstroke. I must make a memorandum of that: 'No good Scout will make too much sunshine at once; it's dangerous.' Got anything to eat?"

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"Gag him, Walt, while I hold him," cried Hal, falling on the prone figure. There was a short sharp struggle in the midst of which one of the supporting posts of the lean-to was knocked out of place, bringing a corner of the roof down on the combatants. From under the wreck presently crawled the cause of the disaster, while Hal and Walter continued to struggle, each mistaking the other for their would-be victim. He watched them for a minute and then, brushing hemlock needles from his hair, began his song right where it had been so abruptly cut off:

"—— a stick to make a din, din, din.
He stubbed his little toe
And that is all I know
About the little man and piece of tin, tin, tin."

At the first note the struggle under the wrecked lean-to ceased, and Hal and Walt crept forth grinning sheepishly.

"You win, Spud," cried Walter. "You're the boss little sunshine-maker of Woodcraft Camp, and you were sure needed just now. Come, help us fix up this lean-to and we'll tell you our little tale of woe."

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The solemn youth looked at them suspiciously. "Have you got anything to eat?" he demanded. "I never could listen to a sorrowful tale on an empty stomach. I always weep better with them that weep and rejoice better with them that do rejoice if my stomach's full. A full stomach expandeth the heart, while an empty stomach depresseth the liver."

Hal held up a small box of ginger wafers, the seal still unbroken, which had been brought from the general store at Upper Chain on the same boat that brought the letter from Woodhull. "Mess will be served immediately after camp has been restored to order," said he soberly. "But it will be served only to those who have earned it," he added as an afterthought.

"'Tis well, most noble captain, and I have the honor to report for service," replied Spud, striking an attitude borrowed from some old theatrical print.

"Come on then!" retorted Walt. "Only those who help me will help themselves to my grub. and those cookies happen to be mine."

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A few minutes of active work on the part of the three boys served to restore order, and then with the box of cookies between them they lounged comfortably on the balsam bed.

"Now, fire ahead and put me wise to the particular reason for this gloom party," commanded Spud with a cookie in his capacious mouth and one in each hand.

"Well, you know what our plans were for the first two weeks in September after the close of camp," began Walter.

Spud nodded. "If I don't it isn't for lack of hearing about them. That trip into the Maine woods is all you fellows have talked about for the last month," he mumbled. "I'm not wishing you any hard luck, but if something happens to ——"

"Don't say it!" Walter implored. "Don't wish us anything until you have read that letter." He thrust Woodhull's note out to Spud, who accepted it as if he thought he might be the butt of some joke. A hasty reading of the contents, however, relieved his mind of all suspicions, and in an instant he realized how great was the disappointment of his two friends.

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"Oh, I say, this is a ghastly shame! If I'd known you were up against any such chunk of gloom as this I wouldn't have come fooling around the way I did," he blurted out. "Why, I've sat around on my hunkers listening to you fellers talking about that trip until I was that envious that I didn't dare look in the glass for fear I'd find myself turning green. And now at the very last to have your plans knocked out this way! Why, it's a—a—it's a crime, that's what it is!"

Hal smiled in sour fashion. "Do you like that any better than beastly, Walt?" he asked.

"Not much," replied Upton. "It's neither a crime nor beastly, but just hard luck. I confess that Louis' letter was pretty near a knockout at first, but our little sunshine-maker here" (Walter smote Spud a mighty blow on the chest just as that young gentleman started to swallow a mouthful of cookie, with the result that half went down the wrong way) "has quite revived me, and now I'll do as much for him." Thereupon he fell on Spud and pounded him on the back, and poured water down his throat faster than he could swallow, until, red in the face and gasp-

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ing, his victim lay back and feebly shook his head as Hal offered him another cookie.

"Have you broken the news to Sister yet?" Walter inquired when order was once more restored.

Hal shook his head. "No," said he, "I came straight here as soon as I got the letter. Poor kid! I believe he'll be fully as much disappointed as we are."

"That reminds me. What did you chaps do to the youngster on Swift River last year?" Spud broke in. "Why, last summer up to the time you fellows took him into the woods he was afraid of his own shadow—scared to death of the water and a regular baby about the dark. This year he's one of the nerviest youngsters in camp and one of the most likable. I wasn't a bit surprised when I heard that he was to be the fourth member of that Maine hunting party, but however you came to take him on that Swift River cruise last year has been a puzzle I never could solve."

"You didn't see the real boy last year, and this year you do, that's all," replied Walter. "We didn't either until mighty near the end

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of that cruise, but Louis Woodhull did, and that is how Sister happened to go along. We'll tell you about it some time. Speaking of angels ——" Walter pointed along the trail from the direction of the camp. A boy of fourteen, rather slight in build but wiry and with well knit muscles, was advancing toward the lean-to. It was Edward Plympton, dubbed "Sister" in derision the year before, and called "Sister" now as a term of affection by his intimate friends, chief of whom were Upton and Harrison.

"Hurry up and take your place with the others on the chief mourner's bench," called Spud. "I'm not one of them myself, but sort of first assistant. Now, Walt, break it gently."

"Our trip's off, Sister. Whole thing's gone up like the smoke of last year's camp-fires," said Walter.

"What's that?" demanded Sister, surprise, consternation and unbelief struggling for mastery in his face.

"There, there," said Spud soothingly, fanning Sister with his hat. "Walt is a savage and his frankness is fairly brutal though pic-

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turesque, especially that about last year's smoke. He should have left it to me to break the news. The fact is, my son, the Maine woods is too small a place for you this year, the guides don't want you, the moose have sent word that they won't show themselves to you, and the deer all threaten to go on a strike. In short, you are not going to the Maine woods this year. That's the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Plymptom gave the others such a look of perplexed entreaty that Walt took pity on him and passed him the letter which had so dashed their hopes.

"Well?" said Walter as Plympton laid the letter down with a comical expression of dismay.

"Where are we going?" inquired Plympton in a tone that implied that he took it for granted that they were going somewhere.

"Where are we going? Why, you freckle-nosed tenderfoot, we're not going anywhere! It's all off! Haven't you got that through your head yet?" howled Hal, whose temper was beginning to boil again at further realization of the complete miscarriage of their plans.

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"Oh, of course it's all off so far as Maine is concerned, and I'm mighty sorry, and a whole lot disappointed," said Plympton, "but of course you've planned some other trip to take its place. Let's have it."

Hal and Walter stared at him stupidly. He spoke in such a matter-of-fact-of-course-it's-all-settled air that instinctively each began to wonder if he really hadn't been subconsciously thinking of some such thing himself.

"I—I'm afraid we haven't had time to make any plans yet," replied Walter hesitatingly. "You see, we got the news only half an hour ago, and we've hardly sensed it yet."

"I'll bet Sister's got a little plan all worked out, ticketed and ready for delivery," interrupted Spud, who had shrewdly been watching the youngster's face. "Let's have it, Sister, only bear in mind that if it meets with your Uncle Spud's approval he's got to be counted in on it. Now undo your little prize package and let's have a look at it."

Plympton flushed. "You see," he began slowly, "I had thought of the possibility of this falling through. Not that I thought it was

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going to or had any suspicions that it might, but every once in a while the thought 'supposing it should' would come into my mind. Then I would get to wondering what we might do in place of it; and so I got to turning over different plans and working 'em out. Then one day I just happened to hear Big Jim and one of the other guides talking about Lost Trail and Smugglers' Hollow, and the thought popped into my head what a bully trip it would be to try to follow this old trail. So I made a lot of inquiries and read up a lot about it in some books in Dr. Merriam's library, and the more I read the better the idea of a hike up through the mountains along the supposed line of this old trail struck me. You fellows, that is, Walt and Hal, have had two canoe trips and I've had one. Why not a two weeks' hike through the wilderness for a change? I think it would be great fun to hunt for that old trail, for they say it is really lost. And it's got a mighty interesting history. Used to be used by the Hurons when they made raids from Canada down into this country. If we can get the consent of Dr. Merriam and the folks at home why not have

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a try at following the old trail and trying to work it out?"

"Listens good to me, son, and you've got to count me in if you try it," said Spud. "What do you say, Walt? Looks to me like Sister will make a better Scout than any of us if he keeps on. He's put one over on you fellows this time, for he has lived up to the law of good scouting, which is to be prepared, and here he is trotting out a new plan all worked out while you fellows were doing nothing but chew gloom. Let's get together after mess to-night and see what this plan of Sister's looks like when it's analyzed. Listens to me like there is something in it, and if you fellows are as good sports and Scouts as Sister you'll forget your disappointment about the other trip and get busy on another which will include—Spud Ely, the original sunshine-maker."

The call for evening mess sounded just then, and it was agreed that the four should meet afterward, and Plympton should go into greater details regarding his idea, and also should tell them the story of Lost Trail as he had pieced it together from history and legends.

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CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF LOST TRAIL

As soon as evening mess was over and camp duties for the day completed the four boys met at a favorite spot on the edge of the lake affording an unobstructed view to the west, and where a few choice spirits were wont to gather at the hour of the setting sun. Among themselves it was known as Woodhull's Point, because it was the former leader of the Delawares, Louis Woodhull, who had first discovered its charm and had made it a rallying point for his followers. The sun was well below the horizon formed by the jagged skyline of the higher mountains, and the crown of bald old Seward was bathed in a glory of crimson which found its reflection far out in the mirror-like surface of the lake and by contrast made blacker the heavy shadows of the mountain's flank and the wood-girt margins of the lake. The spirit of peace and

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a great calm seemed brooding over the world, and a solemn hush like a benediction pervaded the wilderness as if the very trees offered a silent blessing on the parting day.

The boys sat silently gazing out over the darkening lake. Even the irrepressible Spud had succumbed to the influence of the place and the hour. The crimson glow faded. A soft, clear light lingered on the mountain top as if loath to yield to the coming night. The shadows deepened to impenetrable blackness. Far back on the edge of a lumber cutting a great horned owl (Bubo virginianus) abruptly hooted, and the fierce notes startled all four from their reveries. Indeed, Spud gave a perceptible start. Walter noticed it.

"It's a lucky thing that Spud isn't a hare. He's so nervous that he'd give himself away to old Hush-wing at the very first hoot," he remarked.

"I'm glad I'm not a little hare
To jump to death at every scare;
I'd rather be a little boy ——
My papa's and my mama's joy,"

announced the unabashed Spud. "I hereby call this meeting to order, announce the

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honorable Mr. Edward Plympton, otherwise known as Sister, as the speaker of the evening, and move, second and announce as unanimously carried a vote of thanks to the honorable Spud Ely for his services as presiding officer. Gentlemen, Mr. Plympton."

The real purpose of the meeting thus being duly set forth all dreaming due to the influence of the hour and the surroundings abruptly ended and Plympton at once plunged into his tale.

"As near as I can find out this trail, known now only as 'Lost Trail,' first came into prominence in the early French and Indian wars and was used in many raids on the border settlements of the English. Even then it was shrouded in mystery. At least that is the way it appears from the records. A handful of Indians under a French leader would suddenly appear, raid an outlying settlement and as suddenly disappear. That they had not come and did not return to their strongholds by any of the known trails was soon established, for a close watch was kept on these trails, and it would have been next to impossible for a war party to pass over them

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without being seen, or at least leaving some record of their passage either going or coming.

"Later, in the war of the Revolution, the same thing happened. No large expeditions ever took this trail, as it was understood to be difficult for troops burdened with the necessary camp equipment to follow, and this is probably true from what we know of the nature of the country. But for raiding parties, traveling light, it appears to have been quite practicable, and if certain old legends are to be believed many an American scalp reached the Indian strongholds in Canada by way of this old trail through the mountains. It is said that no prisoners ever were taken over this trail lest one should escape and carry the secret of it back to the settlements. The raiding parties invariably killed and scalped all who fell into their hands. As a result the trail was known all along the border as 'The Trail of the Bloody Scalp,' and doubtless it was credited with playing a much more important part in border warfare than was actually the case. It is probable that many successful raiders were alleged to have used the old trail when, if the

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truth were known, they never were within miles of it.

"There is a story of an old trapper whose cabin had been raided during his absence and his family killed by the redskins. Single-handed he started out on the trail of the red devils and found that, as he suspected, they had taken the 'Bloody Scalp Trail.' Somewhere up in the mountains here he came up with them, a party of six, headed by a white renegade. Believing themselves beyond pursuit they had grown careless and had posted no guard. Waiting until all were asleep he shot the leader, and then with clubbed musket leaped into their midst and brained two before they had recovered from the first surprise of the attack. It happened that he was something of a ventriloquist, and right here is where his powers stood him in good use. Throwing his voice from one side to the other he made it appear that the savages were surrounded by foes, and the remaining three made a break for their lives without stopping to fight or to see what had happened to their companions. Then, satisfied with his vengeance and knowing the hopelessness of pursuing

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through a country of which he knew nothing he took the back trail and safely reached the settlements.

"After the wars ended and the Indians had been driven from this section, or had become partially civilized, the old trail appears to have been forgotten save by certain lawbreakers, notably a band of smugglers who had somehow learned of its existence and found some old Indian to guide them over it. For a time considerable contraband stuff reached the States via Canada, but the place of entry was a mystery. The revenue officers were at their wit's end when one of them, posing as a hunter, by chance stumbled on a cabin hidden in a lonely hollow back here in the mountains and found evidence that convinced him that it was a sort of cache for smugglers. Returning he got together a posse and with an old trapper to guide them they surrounded the cabin just after the gang had brought in a lot of contraband goods from Canada. A sharp battle followed in which two or three were wounded, but no one killed, and the whole gang was captured. Ever since then the place has been known as 'Smugglers' Hollow.'

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"After this affair the old trail appears to have been little used save by an occasional trapper or hunter. In time the lumbermen broke into this country and with their wasteful methods, of which we have seen so much evidence right around here, they skinned the country almost to the Canada line. Fires followed, as they always do where such methods are employed, and after these came snowslides in winter and landslides in summer, with freshets on every stream each spring and constant erosion all along the watersheds because of the inability of the bare soil to hold and conserve the water. All these things helped to obliterate the old trail until virtually it ceased to exist, at least beyond Smugglers' Hollow. And there is no certainty that the present trail to the latter place is the original 'Bloody Scalp Trail.' It has been called Lost Trail for years, and so far as I can find out no one in the last twenty years has had interest enough to try to follow it through to the end. Of course it is possible that some old trappers, or maybe some outlaws, like poachers and violators of the game laws, still know of it and use it, but if they do they keep it to themselves, I guess.

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"It is supposed that in the old days the trail ended in an Indian village on the Canadian side of the line, but Indian villages never were permanent and whether there is anything at all or not at the other end now I haven't been able to find out. I think it would be great fun to try to work out the old trail, and prove what kind of Scouts we are. Anyway, if we've learned anything worth while about woodcraft we are bound to come out somewhere."

"Sure!" broke in Spud. "We couldn't help it if we wanted to. Everybody is somewhere all the time. Why, fellows, we are somewhere right now! We're here!" Spud spoke with an air of such pleased discovery as to be quite irresistible, and a general laugh followed.

"Nobody is ever nowhere," continued Spud, "and if everybody is always somewhere, why nobody is ever really lost; it's the somewhere that is lost. Where did you say this somewhere is that we are to come out at, Sister?"

Spud was suddenly pulled over backward, there was a brief struggle, his hands were

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bound behind his back with a handkerchief and another served as a gag.

"Go on, Sister," panted Walter, while Hal raised the unfortunate Spud to a sitting position. "Our little sunshine-maker slipped a cog and short circuited, but he's all right now. Fire away."

Plympton grinned. "What I mean is," he continued, "that we can't go very far astray. You see the Saint Lawrence River is bound to prevent us from rediscovering Hudson Bay, anyway, and if we failed to really find the old trail we could have a bully time just tramping across to the big river or to some railway station on this side. Of course we could stop at the railroad that is on this side of the line, and travel that way over to Lake Champlain. But it seems to me it would be more fun to cut across this road, and keep on to the end of Lost Trail, or some point in Canada where we can connect for Montreal. We'll see Champlain and Lake George on the way back. What do you fellows think of it?"

"It listens good to me, seeing that the

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Maine trip is off," said Hal promptly. "How about you, Walt?"

"Same here," replied Walter. "Sounds bully. We could make it a regular exploring trip. Of course as first-class Scouts we ought to live off the country, and as the open season on birds and deer will be on I believe we can do it and have the time of our lives. All I am afraid of is that the folks at home will object. You know we've never been into the deep woods without a guide, and I have a hunch that the powers that be will raise a holler."

"A guide is ut yez be afther nading? Shure 'tis meself that's the boss little guide av the North Woods, and though Oi don't know where ut is yez be afther wanting to go, 'tis Pat Malone will take yez there, be ut anywhere or nowhere," broke in a rich Irish voice.

Before the others could voice their surprise at Pat's sudden appearance among them Spud broke in. "It isn't anywhere or nowhere that we want to go, Pat; it's somewhere, but we don't know just where that is. Can you take us there?"

"Sure!" replied Pat. "Just as aisy as

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Oi untied ye widout the enemy, yer frinds, being any the woiser. Oi will not mintion what Oi do be thinking av a bunch av Scouts what will let any wan shtale into camp, and thim wid their eyes open, widout so much as a challenge. Arrah now, shure 'tis not a guide but a nurse yez do be nading if yez are going into the big woods. Tell me about ut."

"Sure, Pat!" replied Walter, making room for Pat to sit down beside him. "You put one over on us that time, but you see we were so interested in Sister's yarn about Lost Trail that none of us was on guard. I bet you couldn't sneak into camp on us that way if we were really on the watch. Could he, fellows?"

A most emphatic "no!" was the response to this appeal. Pat was seemingly occupied in gazing at a friendly little star that winked down at him.

"'Be prepared.' Shure, 'tis a pretty motto," he murmured to the friendly star, "but 'tis better forgotten afther the trouble be over than misremimbered before the trouble begins, to my way av thinking."

"Don't rub it in, Pat," pleaded Walter.

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"You caught us napping this time in a way no good Scout ever should be caught. Now listen to our little tale of woe and Sister's plan for making the best of it, and then tell us what you think about it."

With this Walter plunged into the story of the miscarriage of their plans for the Maine trip, and briefly reviewed Plympton's plan for a substitute trip. Pat listened in silence to the end. Then he arose abruptly, threw his shoulders back, brought his heels together with a sharp click, gave the Scout salute and said: "Pat Malone, first-class Scout, leader av the Bull Moose Patrol, the same being the best bunch av Boy Scouts in the North Woods, bar none, volunteers his services free and widout cost, and by the same token 'tis himself that has been to Smugglers' Hollow."

The last words brought all the boys to their feet, everybody talking at once and all crowding around Pat as they plied him with questions. Was it true? Could he find the way there again? Did he know anything about the trail beyond? Would it be a hard trip? Could they live off the country? How long would it take to make the trip?

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Finally Pat broke away, and doubling his big fists threatened to "knock the block off av the nixt bye to ask a question." Then once more they sat down to an earnest discussion of the Lost Trail plan and Pat told them what he knew of the country as far as Smugglers' Hollow. Beyond there he had not been, but he had talked with lumbermen and hunters who had, and he had no doubt that the trip through to some railroad or river village in Canada could be made even if the original trail could not be found.

In the midst of the discussion the first bugle ten minutes before the sounding of taps warned them that there was no time to lose in getting back to camp. It was hurriedly agreed that Walter and Plympton should lay the plan before Dr. Merriam, the head of Woodcraft Camp, the next day in an endeavor to get his approval. With this gained the boys felt sure of winning over their parents. Pat bade the others good-night and started for the lumber camp some two miles distant where he was employed, promising to return the following evening to learn the verdict of Dr. Merriam.

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"What do you think of having Pat go along?" asked Hal as they paused in front of the wigwam of the Delawares, of which tribe Walter, Spud and Plympton were members.

"I think it is the solution of the whole problem," replied Walter promptly. "I doubt very much if Dr. Merriam would approve of us going on any such trip without a guide, and you know Pat is a licensed guide now."

"No, I didn't know. Is that so?" replied Hal in surprise. "That makes a difference."

"You bet it does," responded Walter with some emphasis. "Besides, the doctor takes a great interest in Pat, and I happen to know that he has a great deal of confidence in Pat's ability. Ever since the time Pat showed the stuff that is in him by returning Mother Merriam's pin which that black rascal of a crow had stolen when the whole camp thought that Pat himself was the thief the doctor has taken a direct and personal interest in Pat, and has quietly done a lot to help him. I overheard him tell Big Jim that he would have to watch out or Pat would take his laurels, and you know Big Jim is rated the best guide in the North Woods. If Pat can go I think the

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doctor's consent to the plan is as good as won. Say, Hal, this trip will be bully. We've got to take our hats off to Sister for thinking of it and planning it all out. I believe it'll be just as much fun as the Maine trip, and I'm just going to forget all about the latter."

"Me too," replied Hal. "Well, so long. See you in the morning. Put it up to the doctor good and strong."

Walter grinned. "I'm going to leave that for Sister. He's the best little talker we've got, because he's got all the facts; he's prepared. Good-night."

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CHAPTER III

MAKING READY

"HURRAH!" Walter Upton threw his hat in the air and turning gave Plympton a bear hug that threatened to crack the ribs of the smaller lad. "You're a wonder, Sister, with a capital W when it comes to putting across a smooth talk. It's a mighty lucky thing for us that you had the whole thing worked out as you did with those maps and things. The Big Chief wouldn't have said yes if he hadn't seen that you knew what you were talking about and had something solid to work on. We certainly owe it to you, old Scout, for having such a bully scheme all worked out and ready when the other fell through. But I don't believe we'd have gotten away with it then if Pat Malone hadn't said he'd go. It will be great having him along, better than if we had Big Jim or one of the other guides, because it will be more like doing the stunt ourselves. Pat's a Boy Scout himself, and if

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we succeed in finding the old trail and following it to the end it will be a record for scouting that we can send in to headquarters and be proud of. Pat is no end of fun, and besides, he's a mighty good woodsman. Let's hunt up Hal and Spud and tell them the good news."

"You forget that we haven't got the consent of the folks at home yet. You can't skin a deer until you've got him, you know," panted the younger boy as he strove to recover his breath.

"It's just as good as secured," declared Walter. "My father and Hal's will approve of anything that the Big Chief approves of, and I guess your folks and Spud's feel the same way. I wonder where the other fellows are."

"Fishing," replied Plympton. "Said they couldn't stand the suspense doing nothing, and fishing is the greatest antidote for overwrought nerves in the world. They were going to try their luck at Bass Rock, and we can signal them from the end of the pier."

The two boys hurried down to the long pier and out to the end of it. Far up the lake at a famous fishing ground were three canoes.

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Cupping his hands over his mouth Walter sent the long yell of the Delawares rolling across the water, and in a moment the yell was returned, followed by the Seneca yell.

"They're there, all right, all right!" exclaimed Walter and climbing up on top of a big post at the extreme end of the pier he signaled with his arms in the semaphore code O. K. Almost instantly a figure stood up in the bow of one of the canoes and began to wave its arms in a way that to the uninitiated would have been meaningless, but which to good Scouts was as clear as spoken words.

"H-u-r-r-a-h w-a-i-t f-o-r u-s," spelled Plympton.

Then the figure in the canoe dropped down, the sun flashed on two paddles, and the canoe shot toward them at a rate that made the two watchers grin.

"Some paddlers," commented Walter. "Must be trying for a record. Wonder why."

When the canoe drew alongside it was a question which were the more eager and excited—the bearers of the good news or the impatient fishermen. Questions and answers volleyed back and forth until at last all hands

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were forced to pause for breath. The canoe was lifted from the wāter, the fish dressed and turned over to the mess cook, and the four boys adjourned to their favorite retreat in the lean-to, where Hal had broken the news of the Maine disappointment only the day before. There they at once plunged into a discussion of plans as if no such thing as parental objection were possible.

The first thing to be done was to write the folks at home. Dr. Merriam was consulted, and he gladly consented to write a personal note to be inclosed in each letter. The afternoon boat carried the four letters, and with this matter off their minds the boys turned their undivided attention to the subjects of equipment, supplies, etc. At once there was a conflict of opinion. As a matter of fact they were confronting a new experience. Upton had previously made two trips into the wilderness, one short one with Big Jim, the guide, and a two weeks' cruise on Swift River on which Louis Woodhull, Hal and Plympton had been his companions. The two latter had made but this one trip, while Spud's experience consisted solely of the two and three day trips

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with a guide which were a part of the general training of Dr. Merriam's famous Woodcraft Camp. All of these had been chiefly by water. There had been some two-day trips into the mountains with guides, but these were so short that they hardly furnished a basis for decision as to how to prepare for a two weeks' hike.

"If this were a canoe cruise we are getting ready for I could make out in ten minutes a list of everything we would need to take, but this stunt is so different that I really don't know where I am, and you fellows are just as much at sea," declared Walter after a heated argument over the amount of food supplies they should take. "With a canoe the mistake of taking too much isn't so bad, though it's bad enough on the carries, eh, Hal?"

Hal grinned at the memory of their discomfiture on the first portage of their Swift River trip, when he and Walter had overloaded themselves in an effort to show Plympton what a tenderfoot he was.

"Me for traveling light every time when I've got to be my own packhorse," said he. "I thought we were pretty near to living the simple life on that trip, but this time it will

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have to be the primitive life if we are going to get any fun out of it. There will be no going back for second loads. It's going to be one big portage from start to finish, and every ounce is going to count. I tell you what, let's leave this matter until Pat shows up to-night and be guided by what he says. He knows better than we do what we are likely to go up against, and he's traveled enough in these old woods to know just what we will and what we won't need. You—you don't suppose there is a chance that he'll back out, do you?"

This was a contingency that none of them had thought of, and the very suggestion had a depressing effect. If Pat failed them the trip was off.

"Let's go up to the lumber camp and make sure," suggested Spud.

"Nix!" said Walter shortly. "We don't want to be butting in on Pat while he is at work. I guess we can stand the suspense until night. He said he'd be here right after mess, and when Pat says he'll do a thing he does it. You can count on him every time. Let's organize this expedition. It would be

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mighty poor scoutcraft to start out on a trip like this without a clear understanding of—of——" There was a momentary hesitancy which Spud instantly seized upon.

"Of who's boss," he suggested.

Walter flushed slightly. "That's about the size of it," he assented. "Of course we ought to have a leader and agree to take orders from him just as if it were a regular patrol. Then there won't be any wrangling over a difference of opinion. Each one ought to have certain duties for which he is to be held responsible, and all this ought to be decided before we start."

"Whoop-a-la! Hold me tight, fellows! I've got an idea," Spud broke in.

"What is it?"

"Don't ask him, fellows. It's a shame to take away the only one he has ever had."

"Does it hurt, Spud?"

"I bet you swiped it."

Spud drew himself up in a grand pretense of offended dignity. "Just for that I've a great mind to keep it all to myself," he asserted. "But I won't. No, sir, I won't, because as a Scout under oath I am bound 'to help

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other people at all times,' and you need my idea. You need help, and so I've got to give it to you. I hate to part with it under such conditions, but my sense of duty compels me to. What's the matter with organizing a regular patrol for three weeks, or until we are out of the woods?"

"By Jove, he did have one after all! Bully idea, Spud! What do you say, fellows?" exclaimed Hal.

Walter and Plympton agreed that this was just the solution of the problem, even though they were one short of the required number for a regular patrol with Pat counted in.

"How shall we choose a leader—by vote?" asked Plympton.

"Scout leaders are usually appointed by a scout-master. What's the matter with laying the matter before the Big Chief and having him appoint the leader? Then it will be all regular and according to rules," said Spud.

"Another idea!" howled Hal. "Fellows, this thing is getting serious. He'll be having brain fever the first thing we know. We'll have to have him examined before we take him with us on this trip. Two ideas within

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five minutes! Say, Spud, honest now, do you feel well?"

Spud grinned. "Now you mention it I believe my head does ache a little," he confessed. "What about my little scheme?"

It was promptly agreed to, and the boys started at once for Dr. Merriam's headquarters to lay the matter before him. His eyes twinkled as he listened. "You have the right idea," said he. "Without organization nothing worth while is accomplished in this world. Lacking it there can be no discipline, and failure in this respect means complete failure of any expedition. I believe all of you are Scouts of the first class, and this means that you will accept orders from your leader and obey them without question. He may make mistakes. The greatest leaders in the world do that. You may not agree with him. Probably there will be many times when you will not, but ——"

"'Mine not to question why;
Mine but to do and die,'"

paraphrased the irrepressible Spud, sotto voce.

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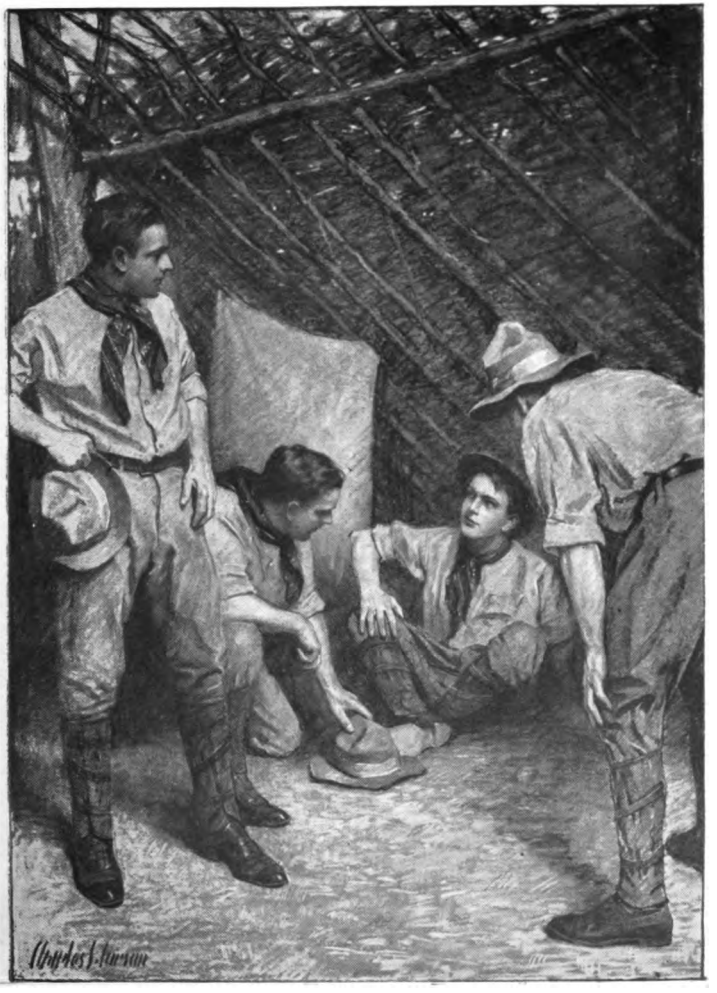

THE BOYS STARTED AT ONCE

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"Exactly," said the doctor, joining in the general laugh. "You rung a bull's-eye that time, Ely, only I hope you won't be called on to make quite such a sacrifice." Then his face grew sober and his voice earnest as he continued: "All of you have been Scouts long enough to thoroughly understand the importance of obedience to orders, and it is a matter of pride with me that I can implicitly rely on Woodcraft boys to live up to their Scout oath. If I couldn't I would not give my sanction to this trip. Since Upton and Plympton laid it before me this morning I have given the matter a great deal of thought, and I believe it is going to be a splendid test of scoutcraft and one which, if you meet it successfully, will not only add to your own personal prestige but will reflect no small honor on Woodcraft Camp.

"While this trip has been planned as a pleasure trip pure and simple I believe that it should have a serious purpose as well, and with this end in view I am going to make it an official expedition of discovery and exploration sent out by Woodcraft Camp. Of course I have known more or less of Lost Trail for

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years, and it has been in my mind to some time do what you propose to do—work it out to the end. Now I take great pleasure in commissioning you to do what I would do were I to undertake the task myself. You will fully map out the trail, make notes of the topography of the country, the varieties and condition of standing timber, the prospects of reforestation where the country has been lumbered over, the watercourses and their condition, the vegetable and animal life, and whatever else of value and interest you may discover. You will, of course, blaze the trail as you go for the guidance of others who may desire to make the trip in the future. It is quite possible, indeed I think it probable, that you will not be able to reëstablish the line of the old trail in full, but failure to do this must not be regarded as a failure of the expedition providing you win through to some point across the international boundary whence you can secure transportation home, and have faithfully made the records already mentioned.

"These records you will forward to me in the form of a detailed report after you have

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reached your homes. The report will be placed in the files of Woodcraft Camp and a copy duly sworn to will be forwarded to the national headquarters of the Boy Scouts of America in New York. You have an opportunity, I may say an exceptional opportunity, to demonstrate what Scout training can do to develop manliness, self-reliance and efficiency in average boys. I shall look to you to establish a record which I personally, and all present and future members of Woodcraft Camp, will take pride in.

"You have asked me to appoint a leader. In view of his experience as a leader of a patrol at his home, and the fact that he has had a somewhat more extended experience in the woods than the rest of you, I herewith appoint Upton as leader. He is your commanding officer, and on him rests the responsibility for the success or failure of the undertaking. It is your privilege to adopt a name for the patrol. If you will permit me I will make a suggestion in this connection. It is that you adopt the name of 'Lone Wolf.' I choose this because it suggests tirelessness, ability to hold your own under the most ad-

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verse conditions, persistence on the long trail, absolute self-reliance, marvelous ability in trailing, extreme hardihood, and because the wolf was once a familiar inhabitant of the country through which you are going, and even now is occasionally encountered, despite persistent hunting by man.

"Of his undesirable traits we will say nothing," added the doctor with a smile. "It is sufficient that he possesses to a marked degree the desirable traits mentioned, and they are traits that you will need on such a trip as you propose. Now one thing more: When you are ready to start I will give you a sealed message to be delivered to the chief magistrate of the town or village where your trail ends. Now you have something less than two weeks in which to prepare, and you know the success of any undertaking lies largely in the thoroughness of the preparations. I shall be glad to give you such advice as seems wise. Have you any questions to ask at this time?"

"If you please, Doctor, we are rather at loss as to what is the proper equipment for a trip of this kind, and should greatly appreciate your advice in the matter," said Walter.

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"Mr. Leader," replied the doctor gravely, albeit with a twinkle in his kindly eyes, "it is quite as much a test of good scoutcraft to prepare for the trail properly as to take care of yourself when on the trail. It seems to me that it is your business to work out this problem for yourselves. When you have done so you may report to me, and then I shall be glad to make suggestions. If that is all now we will end this conference with the understanding that this expedition has my hearty approval and my confidence in its success."

Giving the scout-master's salute the boys withdrew. Once outside the office Spud drew a long breath. "Say," he exclaimed, "isn't the Big Chief a peach? Made me feel like a regular explorer going out to hunt for something big like the North Pole or the lost mines of the Incas or the African pigmies. And didn't he put it straight up to us, though? Regular old Foxy Grandpa about that fitting out business! I guess he's right at that. You can't put anything over on the Big Chief. It'll be great taking that message and all. Hurrah for the Lone Wolves! Say, Walt—excuse me

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—Mr. Leader, when are you going to appoint your officers?"

Upton grinned. "I herewith make my first appointment—Private Spud Ely, official sunshine-maker of the Lone Wolf Patrol," he announced. "Now, fellows, I guess there's nothing doing until Pat gets in to-night. Then we can get down to business and plan. The doctor has put it up to us, sure enough, and as good Scouts we are bound to see it through. Get your think-wheels buzzing and be ready to talk business to-night. I'm going for a swim. Anybody else coming?"

"Me!" responded three voices as one, and the Lone Wolves fell in behind their leader at a dog-trot for the canoes.

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CHAPTER IV

PAT MALONE

IMMEDIATELY after evening mess the Lone Wolves, for so they already designated themselves, although the matter had not been put to vote, adjourned to Woodhull's Point to await the appearance of Pat Malone. To the older members of Woodcraft Camp Pat's history was fairly well known, for in one way or another he had managed to be more or less of a factor in camp life for the last three years, but none with the exception of Dr. Merriam knew the big Irish lad as did Upton. Between the two a warm friendship had ripened, and it all dated back to the day of Walter's arrival at Upper Chain on his way to Woodcraft for the first time. While waiting for a train he had encountered Pat, a big overgrown bully, badgering a crippled lad of hardly half his size. Then and there Walter had given Pat what the latter always referred

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to as "the best trimming av me loife," his gymnasium training and knowledge of scientific boxing more than offsetting the superior strength and weight of the young woodsman.

To the surprise of the onlookers Pat had been a good loser, and had begged Walter to teach him some of the tricks of boxing and wrestling. The chance came unexpectedly when Walter encountered Pat near Woodcraft Camp and found that he was employed as chore boy at a neighboring lumber camp. There, too, he taught Pat the meaning of the word honor as a Boy Scout knows it, and the natural rugged honesty and sense of fair play inherent in the Irish lad seized upon it with such vigor that that same summer he became a potent factor in the development of the real manhood that lay latent in Hal Harrison, the spoiled son of a multi-millionaire, sent to Woodcraft to keep him out of mischief.

Pat had become greatly interested in Boy Scouts. Scouting appealed to all that was strongest and best in his nature—the natural chivalry of his Irish blood, the love of adventure and skill in woodcraft which were his birthright as a child of the great woods, a

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passion for greater knowledge of Nature and her ways, and a deep seated admiration for the courage of true manliness.

But for that chance encounter in the mill village it is more than probable that Pat would have grown into a brawling, fighting lumber-jack, a bully whose greatest ambition was to be known as the terror of the lumber camps. Though he had little guessed it Walter had fought for far more than the protection of a crippled hunchback that summer day three years before. He had battled for another lad's manhood. At the time it had seemed nothing but a boyish scrap of no importance save for the prestige it gave him as a tenderfoot to be treated with respect by his fellows of Woodcraft Camp. But from just such trivial things come far-reaching results, and that prompt act of chivalry in behalf of one weaker than himself had changed the whole life of another.

Walter and Pat had rapidly established a regard for each other which after events had cemented into a warm friendship. Walter had taught Pat what he could of Scout principles and had sent him a copy of the Boy

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Scouts' Handbook. Pat had at once organized a patrol of the boys in the lumber village, and being a natural leader, to say nothing of his reputation as the best rough and ready fighter of his years in the woods, he had developed a body of Scouts of whom he was justly proud. Dr. Merriam, always quick to see real character no matter how deeply buried, had taken a warm interest in Pat and his efforts, and had aided him in innumerable ways. The boy's ambition once aroused had known no limits and he had eagerly read everything the doctor put into his hands.

Now at seventeen Pat was a man grown in stature, a young giant capable of doing a man's work with axe and peavy, and earning a man's wages. Moreover, he was one of the best guides in the district, and his services were coming to be in much demand by fishermen and hunters, for added to his knowledge of the woods his Irish wit and unfailing good nature made him a great favorite. But woe to the hunter or fisherman who thought to evade the game laws when Pat was his guide, or to the pot hunter who would take unfair advantage of the game he sought. More than

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one had found to his sorrow that the dancing blue eyes of the red-headed young giant could harden to the glint of cold steel, and had come out of the woods empty handed, but with a new idea of the meaning of the word honor.

Something of all this Walter and Hal knew, and in a lesser degree did Spud and Plympton. But not even Walter was aware that Pat's ambitions soared beyond the foremanship of a lumber gang, or being rated as the best guide in the North Woods. That was Pat's secret and Dr. Merriam's. It was the latter who had discovered in the young woodsman a passion for the study of the wild things about him, and had fostered and developed this and told him of the strange creatures in other parts of the world until the boy had become fired with a desire to see and know them for himself, and had come to realize the value of education and to dream of school and college and perhaps some day being a naturalist.

It was no wonder then that the doctor had readily given his consent to the hunt for Lost Trail when he had learned that Pat had offered to go with the boys. But being ignorant of this, and not at all certain that Pat had really

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meant what he said the night before, the Lone Wolves sat impatiently awaiting his coming.

"Bet you he tries to sneak into camp again and give us the grand ha, ha," said Spud as they watched the shadows lengthen across the lake.

"That's so! Let's fool him. We'll all do guard duty and show him that he isn't the whole cheese when it comes to real scouting," exclaimed Hal.

"All right," agreed Walter. "Hal, you watch from that big pine over to that old stump. Plympton, you take from the stump to the opening of the trail to camp. Spud will watch from the trail to the fallen spruce and I'll cover from the spruce to the edge of the setback. That covers every possible way he can get out on the point. Now keep your eyes peeled, and challenge at the first suspicious sound or movement. Perhaps he won't try it to-night, because he knows we are likely to be on the watch after last night. If he does we'll show him that we are prepared."

The boys settled themselves comfortably where each could watch his assigned territory and conversation soon died away, for eyes and

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ears were too much on the alert to permit of distraction. The shadows lengthened and the surrounding woods grew black. Once the scurry of a hare brought a challenge from Plympton. The laugh at his expense had hardly died away when Spud challenged a porcupine which wandered out of the blackness on his side. Another laugh and then silence once more with every sense keyed to the highest.

Down the lake, hugging the shore, drifted a long shadow only a shade blacker than the shadows through which it floated. There was no sound, no telltale ripple to catch the eyes of possible watchers. Ghostlike it drifted to the tip of the point. Noiselessly a huge figure detached itself and silently advanced toward the four silent figures so intently watching the edge of the forest. Spud changed his position uneasily.

"I'll bet he isn't coming to-night," he muttered with a sigh of impatience.

"'Tis a true worrd ye be shpaking, me bye, for how can he be coming whin he's already come?" said a deep voice almost at his back.

All four jumped. They would have been

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no more surprised had a thunderbolt fallen in their midst from the clear sky.

"Shure 'tis proud Oi will be afther being to guide such intelligint and watchful Scouts on Lost Trail," continued Pat in gentle sarcasm. "What be the matter wid thot young star gazer?"

Spud, who was making an exaggerated pretense of seeking something in the heavens, turned slowly. "I was looking for the balloon you dropped out of, Pat. What did you do with it?" he said.

Just then Walter, glancing toward the lake, saw the canoe, and in a flash he understood Pat's stratagem. "You great big red-headed Irishman, I could lick you for putting one over on me that way!" he shouted good naturedly. Instantly Pat squared off.

"Come on, me little bantam! Come on!" he cried. "'Twas a foine lacing ye gave me wance and Oi have not forgot ut. Come on now and show the byes how ye did ut!"

"No, thanks," laughed Walter, ducking a light pass from one of the young lumberman's huge fists. "I am quite well content to rest on my laurels. But tell us, Pat, and tell us

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quick, did you mean what you said last night about going on that Lost Trail trip with us?"

"Shure Oi mint ut. Did yez iver know Pat Malone to say a thing he didn't mane?" was the prompt response.

"Hooray! That settles it!" yelled Spud, doing a war dance. "Now let's get right down to business and get organized."

"And what are yez going to organize?" demanded Pat, seating himself comfortably on the end of a log.

"A patrol—a regular expedition! You're going to be a wolf, Pat, a lone, lone wolf and howl for bloody scalps on Lost Trail way up in the deep, dark, lonesome forest and ——"

"Scout Ely will come to order!" interrupted Walter, and Spud promptly subsided.

Then Walter as leader briefly outlined the plan and the suggestions made by Dr. Merriam, and how he had been appointed leader. As Pat listened his face lighted with enthusiasm.

"'Tis the greatest expedition av discovery since Docther Cook misplaced the North Pole!" he announced. "And what did yez say the name av this patrol is to be?"

"We haven't voted on it yet," replied

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Walter. "We've been waiting for you. We'll put it to vote now. All in favor of naming this the Lone Wolf Patrol please signify it by saying aye."

The aye that followed rolled across the lake and was echoed back by old Seward until a startled loon sought shelter in the reeds on the farther shore.

"Now that that's settled I'll appoint each one to his special duties. Pat is guide with the rank of corporal. In other words he is assistant leader of the Lone Wolves. Hal will take charge of the commissary department. Sister will be the official map maker and historian of the expedition. Spud is ——"

"Spud is already chief sunshine-maker of this patrol and on active duty," that imperturbable youth interrupted.

"He is also hereby formally appointed chief cook and general assistant to everybody else," announced Walter gravely.

"Aw, say, that ain't fair!" howled Spud. "That's putting all the dirty work on my weak and narrow shoulders." He coughed pathetically, and his big frame shook as if racked by his efforts. "Besides," he added,

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"I loathe dish washing." This was quite true, as the others were well aware. Spud was one of the best cooks in camp, and was never happier than when squatting beside a cooking fire concocting some gastronomical treat, but if there was any way of avoiding the cleaning up afterward Spud could be trusted to find it.

"Dirt and food have no possible connection in a Scout camp. Therefore Chief Cook Ely is mistaken in his deductions. However, I was about to add that Plympton will assist him whenever his other duties will permit. Ely will now resume his duties as sunshine-maker," announced Walter.

Spud, who was a born mimic and impersonator, at once gave an imitation of a small boy tickled to death over a new toy, until his companions roared with laughter. Presently Walter put a check to this by reminding the others that their meeting that night had a serious purpose and that time was slipping away. He told them that he appreciated the honor that had been done him in giving him the post of leader and that in assuming the responsibility he should do his utmost to make the expedition a success.

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"While as leader the final decision in all matters will be mine, I want you fellows to feel that I don't for a minute consider that I know it all," he said earnestly. "On all important matters I shall ask for the opinion of each one of you, and shall expect you to give it to me fully and freely whether your views agree with mine or not. This was planned as a pleasure trip to wind up the summer vacation, but Dr. Merriam has made it more than this. He has put it up to us to show just what kind of Scouts we are, and incidentally has made it possible for us to win some honors. There is going to be no end of fun and we are going to have the time of our lives; but instead of having this for the main object we have a real mission to perform. Whatever happens it is up to the Lone Wolves to deliver that message to the chief magistrate of some village north of the Canadian boundary, and to take it there through the woods. Dr. Merriam has made this the real purpose of the trip, largely, I guess, because he thinks there is small chance of our actually finding the other end of Lost Trail. It's one way of letting us down without having to acknowledge the trip a failure.

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So the safeguarding and delivery of that message is to be the first and constant purpose to be kept in mind. But, fellows, if we can do this and actually deliver it at the other end of Lost Trail we will have really done something a whole lot bigger than merely getting through somewhere with the message. It will be a stunt to be proud of, and one that will make old Woodcraft sit up and take notice. I have a hunch that we are going to succeed. Anyway, we are going to make a mighty big try. Now we've got to get right down to brass tacks on the matter of equipment. Pat, we've been waiting all day to get your ideas on this matter. You've got some idea of what is before us and we haven't. Of course we know that we've got to travel light, but we don't agree as to just what that means simply because none of us have had experience on a long hike of this kind. What is your idea on the matter?"

"My idea, is ut?" Pat's eyes twinkled, though in the darkness it was lost to his companions. "Well, my idea is thot yez will want nothing at all but the clothes on yer backs."

"Aw, Pat, what are you giving us? Any-

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body would know better than that. Why, we can't get along without carrying a lot of stuff, food and blankets and guns and cooking outfits and—oh, a whole lot of stuff." Spud ended rather lamely.

"No more did Oi say ye could, Misther Sunshine-maker," retorted Pat. "What Oi said was thot thot was all yez would be wanting. What yez will be nading is another matter. Are ye planning to live off the counthry, Misther Leader?"

Walter nodded. "So far as we can," he replied. "You know the open season on several kinds of game begins September 1st, and that is when we start. One thing we had been looking forward to on that Maine trip was the deer hunting. I thought we might get in a little on this trip. I guess all of us are crazy to have a try for Mr. Lightfoot. Then I suppose there will be a chance for some small game and perhaps for some fish. How about it?"

"There should be no throuble at all in getting all the mate we will be afther nading, and 'tis glad Oi am thot yez be going in true Scout fashion," responded the Irish lad. "Thot

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manes thot we will want a rifle. Shall Oi take me own or will wan av yez bring wan?"

"One of us bring one! Why, we'll each bring one as part of our personal equipment!" cried Spud. "Do you suppose you are going to have all the fun to yourself just because you happen to be guide? One rifle for five fellows! I guess not!"

"Me son, 'tis not a hunting trip but an exploring expedition ye be going on, and 'twas the innocence av ye thot let loose the tongue in spache," returned the unruffled Pat. "Ye will count yer load by pounds at the start and groan over it by half ounces before the ind, or me name is not Pat Malone. And remimber thot a rifle is a matter av pounds and not ounces. 'Tis mate to ate we will be wanting, and wan gun can get ut."

A warm discussion followed. Even Walter was a bit upset by Pat's stand against a general arming of the party, for he was keenly fond of the hunt and he knew that the others were not less eager to enjoy the sport. However, he was too good a woodsman not to see the logic of Pat's stand. Finally a compromise was effected by which it was agreed that Pat

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should take his thirty-thirty for deer and Spud should carry a little twenty-two, with which he was an expert, for supplying the mess with small game, such as grouse, rabbits, etc.

"I suppose," said Hal, when this matter was settled, "that Pat will be putting the taboo on fishing-rods."

"'Tis well shpoken," assented Pat.

"What?" It was Hal's turn to howl this time, for he was an ardent fisherman and he had been joking when he made his previous remark. "Why, you red-headed son of trouble, my rod weighs only five ounces, and what is five ounces?"

"Five ounces is five ounces, and whin ut is in fat bacon shure 'tis joy to the stomach av a hungry man, but whin it is in little shtrips av split bamboo 'tis the very deuce av an inconvenience in hard going, and a seducer av temper in peace-loving men. For what would ye be taking a rod? The fishing ye do will be for to fill the frying-pan and not for the sake av shport. By thot same token a stout hand line will turn the thrick just as nately and save toime. If ye must have a rod ye can cut wan whin 'tis naded."

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On this point Hal was a harder loser, but when Walter decided the question by giving an order that all rods were to be left behind he accepted the situation as a good Scout should. It was decided that each should carry as part of his personal equipment a good hand-line and such assortment of hooks and artificial baits as he pleased.

With these important points settled the matter of general supplies and personal outfits was brought up for discussion, but the warning bugle from camp abruptly ended this.

"The commissary will take this matter up with Corporal Malone at the earliest opportunity and report," ordered Walter as Pat prepared to go to his canoe. Pat and Hal saluted. "Now," continued Walter, "let's have the Lone Wolf yell. Corporal Malone will give it to us first, because I guess he is the only one here who ever has heard the howl of a wolf in the woods."

A minute later the echoes were startled by a howl so realistic that Hal afterward confessed it made his scalp crawl. Then the patrol repeated it as best they could and started at a trot for camp.

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CHAPTER V

ON THE TRAIL AT LAST

THE next ten days were busy ones, for not only were there countless details in regard to the trip to be considered but, as the four Woodcraft boys were to participate in the annual field day which ended the summer season of the camp, they had to give a certain amount of time each day to training for the various events. In due time the anxiously awaited letters from home arrived and suspense on this score was ended, for in each instance the desired sanction was granted.

Hal and Pat had several conferences before Hal was ready to report. The final revised list of personal and general equipment was, to quote Spud, "reduced to the lowest decimal and then shot all to pieces." The personal equipment recommended for each was as follows:

Two suits of woolen underwear.
Two pairs woolen socks or stockings.

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One gray flannel outer shirt.
One heavy sweater.
One pair moose-hide moccasins or shoe pacs.
One double blanket.
One poncho.
Regulation Scout hat and trousers (save in Pat's case).
Compass.
Scout knife.
Belt axe.
One pack.
Ditty bag with needles, thread, fish-line, etc.
Scout first aid outfit.
Scout mess outfit.
One neckerchief.
Three handkerchiefs.
Matches.
Note-book and pencil.
Twenty feet of stout twine.
Towel, soap and tooth-brush.
Toilet paper.

The general equipment was listed as follows:

Long handled axe.
Frying-pan.
Six quart kettle.
Folding aluminum reflecting oven.
Two rifles, as agreed upon.
Food supplies, consisting of flour, bacon, erbswurst, sweet chocolate, cocoa, milk powder, raisins, dried apricots, evaporated potatoes, desiccated vegetables, beans, cereal, crackers, sugar, pepper, salt.
Coil of light rope.
Candles, dish towel and soap.
Matches in waterproof tin.
General medicine kit, containing quinine, cholera remedy, antiseptics, morphine, hypodermic syringe, surgeon's plaster and bandages.

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"A bully commissary you are!" growled Spud as he scanned the list. "Why, you haven't got a single tent down!"

"Extra weight which is unnecessary. We'll have our ponchos and we'll be in country where there is plenty of stuff to make brush shelters if we need them. You can carry a tent if you want to, Spud, but you'll have to tote it all the way," replied Hal.

"What about canteens and coats?" continued Spud, still searching for flaws in the list.

"Canteens not needed in the country because there is sure to be plenty of water all the way. That means one less thing for each of us to carry. Sweaters take the place of coats, are warmer when worn and easier to carry when not worn. Anything else, Spud?"

"Sure thing," grumbled Spud. "Never could stand woolen stockings and don't mean to begin now. And woolen undershirts! Say, is this an arctic expedition? Honest Injun, what difference does it make what I wear so long as I am comfortable?"

"Just this difference: we don't propose to take an ambulance along, and we'll have no

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Red Cross nurses to take care of tenderfeet with the shakes!" snapped Walter, who had taken Spud more seriously than the others. "When you get wet in the woods—and we're going to get wet more'n once on this trip—you can keep reasonably warm and won't take cold if you are wearing wool, but if you're wearing cotton or linen and get a soaking you're in for the shakes or something worse. This patrol dresses right, or it doesn't hit the trail at all!" There was a snap to the way he spoke and a flash in his eyes that showed him to be in earnest.

Spud slyly winked at the others as he saluted his leader and said in a plaintive voice: "Private Ely understands orders, sir, and will obey them to the last drop of his blood. If you please, sir, are moccasins compulsory? I have a brand new pair of waterproof hunting boots with hobnails all over 'em that my papa paid $8 for just for his little boy to wear on this trip. They're coming up on the choo-choo cars by express."

Walter grinned with the others at the pathetic yearning in Spud's voice as he mentioned the new shoes. "Go to thunder, Spud

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—you and your new shoes!" he exclaimed, his good nature once more restored. "But," he added, "I advise you to take along the moccasins just the same. In other respects you will follow the list for personal equipment as made out. It has been approved by Dr. Merriam and stands as an order. If we were going in just for fun and nothing more it would be a different matter, though even then it would be best to see that no one threatened to spoil the fun of the others by foolishness. As it is, we've got to be at our best, and that means that every one of us owes it to every other one to take care of himself and keep in the very best of condition."

"Is Pat going to carry the same equipment that we do?" asked Plympton.

"Practically," replied Walter. "He will take the long handled axe in place of the belt axes we carry. He says that one real axe is worth a dozen short-handled affairs like ours, and when it comes to real work he's right. But these belt axes are mighty handy if a fellow happens to get lost, and that is always a possibility in the big woods. That, too, is the reason that each is to carry an individual first

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aid kit. If we depended on the general medicine kit it might not be handy when most needed."

"How about cameras?" inquired Hal.

"That is a matter for you to decide individually. I won't bar cameras, because I know just what they mean, and I know that none of you has a big one. I shall take mine, of course."

Hal nodded. Photography was a hobby with Upton, and he had already won honors for his work in this line. "Of course you'll be the official photographer," smiled Hal. "I think I'll take my pocket kodak along. How about you, Plympton?"

"Don't own one," was Plympton's prompt reply. "I'll depend on you and Walt for souvenirs."

Spud decided in favor of his twenty-two rifle rather than a camera, and spent all his spare time practicing at the range. The general supplies were to be divided among them. Each would then carry his pack with blanket and poncho roll, leaving both hands free. Meanwhile Pat had made arrangements at the lumber camp for leave of absence,

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Plympton had copied the existing maps of the supposed Bloody Scalp or Lost Trail and had made notes of everything pertaining to it which might be of help, and Walter had checked and rechecked his lists to make sure that nothing had been omitted.

In due time Spud's hunting boots arrived and were proudly displayed to his admiring friends. Certainly they looked very business-like with their heavy soles thickly studded with hobnails. Spud at once put them on to wear around camp in order to break them in, he explained, but he soon found that they were not suited to a canoe, and moreover, were heavy and cumbersome after the sneaks and moccasins to which he had been accustomed all summer.

"Time enough to break them in when we hit the trail," he explained with the air of a veteran. "I'll put it all over the other fellows then. These are the real thing when it comes to footwear. Came from the biggest sporting goods house in New York. Guaranteed to be the best hunting boot on the market. No slipping or sliding with these shoes. I tell you moccasins are not in it with

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these when it comes to rough country and a long hike."

"What will you do when you want to cover up your trail?" inquired one of Spud's admirers.

For a minute Spud was frankly nonplussed. The print of those hobnails might be seen by the merest novice at trailing.

"Well, who wants to cover up his trail?" he blustered. "This is no secret expedition. There will be no enemy trying to trail us. Fact is, the Big Chief wants us to mark the trail, so I guess there won't be any kick coming on my tracks."

Pat Malone grinned broadly when the new shoes were brought out for his inspection.

"Shure 'tis so swift av foot he is thot he will be carrying weight so as not to get too far ahead of us," said he. "Better put a pair av moccasins in yer pack, me bye, just by way av feeling what ut is loike to be loike common folks wance in a while."

"No, sir, no moccasins for me!" insisted Spud. "You're jealous, Pat. That's what's the matter with you." And there the subject was dropped.

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The start was to be made early in the morning following the annual field day. The whole camp turned out to see the expedition off. Dr. Merriam made a brief address telling how it was hoped to reëstablish the old trail, and of the message he was entrusting to the patrol for delivery to the chief magistrate of the village across the Canadian line in which their long hike should end. This he delivered to Upton in a sealed package wrapped in oiled silk. He then turned to Mother Merriam, who stood smiling down on the boys from the office steps, and took from her a small banner on which was worked in black the head of a wolf against a white background. Beneath it appeared the one word "Persistence."

The doctor held it up that all might see it. Addressing the patrol but speaking so that all should hear he said: "In presenting the Lone Wolf Patrol with this banner I take a certain amount of personal pride—pride in the fact such an expedition is to start out from Woodcraft Camp, a true scouting expedition composed wholly of Boy Scouts who have so thoroughly learned the lessons we have

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sought to teach here that I and those associated with me here feel not only justified in allowing them to set forth on what might be a foolhardy undertaking to boys or even men less versed in the ways of the woods and less self-reliant, but confident that they will carry this banner through to their unknown destination unsullied by any act or thought unworthy of true Scouts.

"Four of this patrol, including the leader, have spent the greater part of their lives in city environments. What knowledge they possess of woodcraft, of ability to take care of themselves in new and untried situations such as are to be encountered only in the depths of the great forest, they have learned in Woodcraft Camp. The fifth member is and is not one of our boys. He is not and never has been an enrolled member of Woodcraft Camp, and yet he has been so long identified with the camp life here that I think that most of us feel that he is a true Woodcraft product, and as such are proud of him. Furthermore I am privileged to announce at this time that I have concluded arrangements with him whereby next season he will be on

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the regular force of Woodcraft Camp guides. I refer to Corporal Malone of the Lone Wolf Patrol, who is likewise leader of the Bull Moose Patrol of Upper Chain."

A rousing cheer ending in the camp yell greeted this announcement, while Pat blushed to the roots of his hair and shifted his position uneasily. The doctor held up a hand for silence. "In view of this," he continued, "I think that we may fairly claim the entire patrol as our own. Mr. Leader, this banner bears one word, 'Persistence.' It is characteristic of the animal chosen as the emblem of your patrol. It is the trait that brings success in every undertaking. It is the trait which more than any other is likely to crown your present task with the result you so much desire. It is quite possible that Lost Trail has been so obliterated that it never can be reëstablished. On the other hand it is also quite possible that patience and perseverance and close attention to little things—the observation which allows no detail however trivial to escape—will enable you to re-locate with reasonable certainty the trail over which so many fateful war parties are supposed to

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have descended upon the American settlements in the brave days of old. Between fifty and sixty miles as the crow flies would take you across the line. But you will not be able to travel in a straight line. You have before you a hike of between seventy-five and one hundred miles. It is not a great distance in itself, but you will find it fraught with difficulties. Much of it will be through the wilderness, but not all. You will undoubtedly pass through or skirt several villages, and it is not unlikely that in some of these you may be able to acquire information—bits of local history or old legends—which will materially aid you in establishing the old trail. In any event you are bound to win through with the message I have entrusted to you, and though you may fail of your larger purpose—the finding of the old trail—the delivery of this message will in itself stamp your expedition a success. I bid you Godspeed."

The doctor gravely saluted and the Lone Wolves returned the salute. Then at Upton's command they fell in line and with the little banner flying proudly at their head they

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entered the forest in single file, while the long Woodcraft yell conveyed to them as nothing else could the good wishes of the comrades they were leaving, not one of whom but envied them the long hike and the adventures they were sure to have.

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CHAPTER VI

SPUD CHRISTENS HIS SHOES

As soon as they were fairly in the woods Upton resigned the lead to Pat, to whom the trail as far as Smugglers' Hollow was familiar. This was the immediate objective point, for it had been pretty well established by further search of records that the trail to this point was a part of the original Bloody Scalp Trail and that beyond this would begin the real work of locating the old line of march. According to Pat there was good hunting and fishing in the country around Smugglers' Hollow, and so it had been decided to reach there as soon as possible and make it headquarters until the trail beyond could be worked out or, in the event of failure, it became necessary to push on in order to deliver the message. Allowing twenty miles a day it would take the better part of two days to make the Hollow.

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For the first ten miles the trail was a well-worn lumber road, and Pat set a pace that put the others on their mettle, for the long swinging stride of the woodsman, rolling at the hips and toes pointing straight ahead, was natural to him. By constant practice Walter had acquired this gait, which is a wonderful ground gainer and is the natural gait of the Indian. The foot is set down almost flat and the walker is never off balance. It reduces to a minimum the danger of stumbling and is one of the secrets of still hunting. It was because of this habit of walking with the toes pointing in a straight line forward, instead of turning out, that a war party of redskins could without effort step exactly in the footprints of the leader, leaving but a single trail.

Hal, Plympton and Spud had not acquired the art, and they soon found that they were fairly put to it to keep up with the leaders. Spud was rear-guard. He was the heaviest in build, with the exception of Pat, rather given to stoutness, and before they had covered five miles he was beginning to puff. Moreover, he was becoming conscious of the weight of those new shoes. The fact is, though he would not

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admit it to himself, they were beginning to hurt his feet. In the effort to ease them a little he unconsciously slackened his pace, so that he soon fell behind.

At the point where the Smugglers' Hollow trail left the wagon road a halt was called for a rest and lunch. The others had had a fifteen minutes' rest before Spud came in sight. He looked hot and weary, but he grinned good-naturedly at the banter of his companions as he swung his pack from his shoulders and with an audible sigh dropped down beside them.

"How are the seven league boots?" asked Hal.

"Great! I tell you you fellows are going to turn green with envy before this trip is over," replied Spud promptly and enthusiastically.

Walter glanced at him suspiciously. It seemed to him that the enthusiasm was a trifle forced, a wee bit overdone. "Shoes hurt you any?" he inquired.

"No-o. That is, no more than any new shoes would. They're a little stiff yet, but that's no more than I expected," replied Spud, who was too honest to deny flatly that they

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were giving him trouble, and yet would not for the world have admitted that for the last mile his feet had ached so that every step was an effort. "How much farther do we go to-day?"

"About ten miles more," replied Pat. "We leave the wagon road here and take an old trappers' trail up to Little Goose Pond where we'll be afther spending the night. 'Tis a fair trail, but a little blind in places. Oi blazed ut the last toime Oi was over ut, and 'tis not harrd to follow, but to save toime and throuble 'twill be best for each wan to kape the wan in front in sight. Ut should be aisy to make the pond by three o'clock, and thot will give us toime to get some fish for supper and maybe a rabbit or a grouse or two."

The mere mention of such a possibility was enough to drive all thought of his feet from Spud's head, for eating was the joy of his life, as his companions were well aware. Besides, he was anxious to prove his prowess with the rifle. He never had had a chance to do much hunting, and now that the opportunity offered he was eager to take advantage of it.

"Let's start right along, fellows!" he ex-

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claimed eagerly. "What are we wasting time here for? The sooner we make camp the sooner we can have some fun and a square meal. I'll give you the finest broiled grouse you ever set your teeth in."

"Have ye put salt on their tails thot ye are so sure av thim?" asked Pat drily.

"Oh, we'll get some. This is the first day of the open season and they won't be wild," replied Spud confidently. "Wait till you see me shoot the heads off a few. Come on, let's be moving."

Walter smiled at Spud's confidence and enthusiasm, but he gave the order to fall in. Packs were soon adjusted and once more they hit the trail, Spud again bringing up the rear. The going was now very different, a barely discernible path, and the boys soon realized the wisdom of Pat's advice to keep the one in front always in sight. To Pat the following of such a trail was second nature, mere child's play, his keen eyes running from blaze to blaze without conscious effort despite the fact that some of the blazes were so old that they appeared as hardly noticeable scars on the tree trunks. To Walter the task was only a trifle

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more difficult, for he had had considerable experience in his two former trips in the woods, and besides had faithfully practiced trail following around Woodcraft Camp during the three summers he had spent there. But to the others, who lacked experience, the task would soon have proved impossible had they been alone. Despite their best efforts they would frequently miss an obscure blaze. They soon gave up trying and were content to watch their footing and keep the one in front always in sight.

For the first few miles Spud kept up manfully, although by this time his shoes were hurting unmercifully. Both were slipping at the heel, to say nothing of the way they cramped his toes. But he was game, and there was no hint of his misery in his cheerful responses to the occasional shouts to the rear-guard from those ahead. The trail now began to ascend a spur of a mountain, and became rougher, with occasional patches of bare rock. To his surprise Spud found that on such places the steel hobnails in which he had taken such pride frequently proved his undoing. The points soon wore smooth, and could get no

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grip on the hard rock, with the result that he was constantly slipping and once, where the trail dipped sharply just after crossing the spur, he fell heavily. It knocked the wind out of him for a moment and skinned one shin. For a few minutes he sat where he fell to take account of damages. Then, finding that there was nothing serious, he struggled to his feet and, muttering maledictions on his own pig-headedness for not heeding the advice of the others and leaving the shoes behind, started on.

Now it happened that just beyond the point of Spud's mishap the trail turned abruptly to the right and Plympton, who was next to the rear, had made the turn just before Spud fell, and so was unaware of the latter's mishap. He had shouted at the turn, as had each of the others when they made it, and hearing Spud's exclamation when he slipped had taken it for a reply and given the matter no further thought. Spud, his mind occupied with his troubles, gave no heed to the trail. He took it for granted that it continued straight ahead and plunged onward in an effort to overtake the others. Meanwhile Pat, with the prospect

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of camp only a couple of miles ahead, had unconsciously accelerated the pace. The result was that by the time the unfortunate rear-guard discovered that he was off the trail the others were a good half mile away and saving their breath in order to keep up.

Now of course the thing for Spud to have done was to have stopped the instant he found that he was astray and yelled for his companions. But he was chagrined at his predicament and ashamed to let the others know that he had been so poor a woodsman as to overrun the trail, so instead of using his lungs he made up his mind that he would find the trail himself.

"I can't be far off," he muttered, "and if I make a little circle around I'll be sure to hit it. Then I'll hike it double quick if it kills me." He looked down ruefully at his heavy shoes and made a comical grimace. Then he turned to look up the slope down which he had just plunged. Somehow the thought of climbing back up that steep grade was anything but inspiring. "What's the use?" he muttered. "That trail must come down here somewhere, and I'll find it quicker by looking

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around down here than by wasting time climbing back way up there."

Now this was poor scoutcraft, but a mistake that many another had made before him. He could have retraced his steps, for the imprint of those hobnails would have been easy to follow, but he chose what he believed to be an easier course, one which would at least be easier on his feet, and boldly struck out studying the trees for blazes. He had completed half of a circle of considerable radius when he spied an old scar on the side of a big spruce. Sighting from this he saw another and beyond this a third.

"I thought so," he grunted. "Trust the little sunshine-maker to take care of himself. They may have the laugh on me for falling behind, but they won't have a chance to give me the merry ha, ha, for getting lost." With that he hurried forward warily studying the trees for the telltale blazes.

Now it was mere chance, and also his misfortune, that Spud had stumbled on an old trail made many years before by gatherers of spruce gum, and it was leading him in a direction directly opposite to the one his com-

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panions were pushing along so rapidly. At the end of something less than a mile it ended in an old lumber cutting which years before had been burned over and now was a tangle of young growth and raspberry canes hiding charred stumps, against which he stumbled and barked his shins. After floundering through this for a little way he realized that beyond all question he was lost. He couldn't even re-locate the trail that had led him there. He found a fallen log and sat down to think it over. He was hot, he was tired, his feet felt as if the skin was off of both heels and all his toes, and he was lost in a lumber slash miles from anywhere with which he was familiar. It was time to sit down and think.

One thing Spud did possess which was likely to take him through more trying situations than the one in which he was now placed, and this was an irrepressible sense of humor. It cropped out now despite his discomfort and the uncertainty of his prospects and he grinned as he thought of the unmerciful chaffing he would come in for if it ever leaked out at camp that he had got lost the very first day out. But the grin ended in a wry

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face as he lifted one foot in an attempt to ease it.

"A pretty Scout you are, Spud Ely!" he muttered, "to kill your feet and lose yourself before you've fairly started! Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Obviously the thing to do was to do nothing, that is so far as trying to find the trail was concerned, and he was wise enough to know it. Moreover, there was in his happy-go-lucky, fun-loving nature a good sized bump of common sense. He was not of the panicky kind. He might get into trouble through carelessness, but once in trouble he was not of the kind to make matters worse by losing his head. He had learned his lesson three years before when he had spent a night in the woods with Billy Buxby. Then he had lost his head, but the lesson Billy had taught him then he had never forgotten, and he resolved to employ now the same tactics Billy had employed then, namely, to let the others find him instead of trying to find them.

"They'll miss me before long—probably have by this time—and then Pat will back-trail till he finds the place where I overran.

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I guess he won't have much trouble following those hobnail prints of mine, so all I've got to do is to be good and sit still till I'm found. Hello! What's that?"

He looked sharply toward a patch of briars in which a slight rustle had caught his attention. Presently he made out bright inquisitive eyes peering at him. "A cottontail!" he exclaimed under his breath. "Maybe this is where I can make good on that dinner the boys are likely to be kept waiting for." Deliberately, that no sudden motion should alarm bunny, he lifted the rifle and sighted with care. At the sharp crack of the twenty-two there was a whistle and heavy crash just beyond a windfall to his right. With a startled exclamation Spud turned to see a magnificent ten point buck lightly clear a fallen timber and disappear in the thicket beyond.

"Well, what do you know about that! Me popping at a measly little rabbit with a big buck standing within twenty yards!" he cried disgustedly, quite forgetting that only by the merest chance could the tiny leaden pellet of the twenty-two have much more than stung the larger animal. His dis-

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gust was short lived, however, in a feeling of elation when he found that his aim had been true and in the briars lay a plump rabbit shot through the head.

"Perhaps there are more," he thought hopefully, in the excitement of the hunt forgetting his sore feet and that he was lost. On all sides rabbit signs were plentiful, and within five minutes he started another from its place under a pile of brush. He whistled sharply as the brown form scurried across an open place for the shelter of a bramble thicket. Instantly bunny stopped and sat up in the silly way rabbits have when their curiosity is aroused. The rifle cracked again, but this time Spud was in too much of a hurry. "A clean miss!" he growled as the rabbit dived into the protecting brambles. However, a few minutes later he had another chance, and this time he took more care, with the result he had another rabbit to keep the first one company. A little later a third was secured and Spud's elation knew no bounds. "Some shooting—three rabbits in four shots!" he muttered happily as he ran forward to pick up the last victim.

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It was then that he heard a faint hello. Cupping his hands over his mouth he sent an answering shout ringing through the woods. The reply came instantly and he recognized the voice. "It's Pat, just as I expected," he thought, and once more made the woods ring with a Lone Wolf howl. Then tying the rabbits together by the hind legs he headed in the direction of the voice, now rapidly drawing nearer, happily thinking his troubles were at an end, until once more he became painfully conscious of his feet. "Gee whiz," he muttered, "I hope camp isn't far away." Alas for his forlorn hope! There was a good three miles of trail to be traversed before he would catch a glimpse of the cheerful blaze of the campfire.

Meanwhile at the camp on the shore of Little Goose Pond three boys waited anxiously. Spud had not been missed until the camp had been reached. At first his non-appearance had been a matter for good-natured jollying between themselves. For the last mile and a half the trail had been so plain that the veriest tyro might have followed it, and they not unnaturally concluded that Spud had noticed

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this and had dropped behind as in the morning march, for they were well aware of his ease-loving disposition and they had more than a suspicion that the new boots were growing heavy by this time. But when fifteen minutes had elapsed and they got no responses to repeated yells they began to fear that something was wrong, and when at the end of half an hour there was still no sign of the missing comrade they were certain of it.

Plympton's last recollection of seeing Spud was just before making the sharp turn after crossing the spur of the mountain. He remembered shouting just after making the turn and hearing what he supposed was a reply.

"Thot's where the throuble began," said Pat promptly. "'Tis a blind turn, and Oi'm thinking thot the sunshine-maker's thoughts were more on thim sivin league boots av his than on where he was going, and he wint down the mountain. Mr. Leader, Oi suggest thot Oi be detailed to bring the shtray into camp. 'Twill be aisy trailing by the marks av those same sivin league boots, bad cess to thim."

Pat spoke lightly to allay in a measure the anxiety of his companions. Walter promptly

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acted on the suggestion and detailed Pat to start at once. The others were ordered to open up the packs, cut balsam for beds and prepare the camp for the night. A hunter's lean-to did away with the necessity of building a shelter. When the other work was finished Plympton was ordered to map out the day's course from observations he had made on the way and Hal was sent to try for some fish from the shore, Walter rightly reasoning that if kept busy they would have less time to worry.

As Pat expected, he had no difficulty in finding the place where Spud went astray, and it was no trick at all to follow the deeply imprinted trail of the hobnailed shoes. When he reached the blazed trail of the spruce gum gatherer he guessed right away that Spud had mistaken this for the right trail. He pushed ahead rapidly, only now and then glancing down to make sure that Spud had not lost it. He had hunted through this country and knew the lie of the land perfectly. "'Tis in the ould lumber slash the bye is by this toime, more lost than iver, and by the looks av thim footmarks 'tis heavy his feet be getting," he murmured. "'Tis not far he will be afther

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going now. Oi wonder can Oi make him hear me."

Just then the faint crack of a rifle reached him. "Sure now Oi wonder do thot be a signal," he muttered. He waited a few minutes, listening for several shots in rapid succession, the usual signal of the lost, but they did not come, and a look of puzzled wonder crossed his face. "Oi do belave the bye be shooting his supper! Sure 'tis a foine little shport he is," he exclaimed, and then gave the yell that Spud heard just after killing his third rabbit.

Just as the sun was setting Pat emerged from the trail into the clearing by the camp. In one hand he carried Spud's rifle, and over his shoulder were slung the three rabbits. Behind him limped Spud. There was a very sheepish look on his usually merry face and, though he bravely tried to hide it, there was something very like a look of misery there also. In fact every step of that three miles had been one of torture, such torture as only one who has tramped with blistered feet in heavy, stiff, unyielding shoes can appreciate. Walter saw that something was wrong and

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after the first greetings sought to head off the chaffing he knew was sure to break out.

"Where did you get them, Pat?" he asked, picking up the rabbits. "Stop at a butcher's shop on the way?"

Pat shook his head. "Sure now, are ye thot short in the memory thot ye have forgotten the foine dinner the cook was afther promising us?" he asked. "'Twas to get ut thot he shtopped by the way. 'Twas some throuble to make the little bastes sit still long enough to take their little lead pills, and so he is by way av being a thrifle late."

"Oh, go on, Pat! Spud never shot those rabbits. You did it yourself," cried Hal.

"No such thing! I did it with my little rifle!" sputtered Spud, roused to self-defense by this slur on his shooting ability.

"'Tis a true worrd he be shpaking, and a foine little shot thot he is," said Pat. "And seeing thot he has taken all the throuble av getting them 'tis mesilf will relieve him av his duties as cook. Will yez have thim fricazaed or just plain broiled? For mesilf Oi think Oi'll take thim broiled."

Meanwhile Spud had pulled off the offend-

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ing shoes and angrily hurled them into a far corner of the lean-to. The stockings followed, and when his companions saw the poor abused feet and the barked shins all thought of chaffing and fun at his expense vanished. On each heel was a blister as large as a quarter of a dollar. The tops of the toes were chaffed so that on several the skin was rubbed up, and the feet were swollen and inflamed. A first aid kit was promptly produced and while Pat dressed and cooked the rabbits, with Hal and Plympton as willing assistants in the preparation of supper, Walter gave his attention to the injured feet. They were tenderly bathed. Then sterilizing a needle already threaded with a soft white thread, he gently passed this through the blisters, leaving a bit of thread in each to act as a drain and be removed when the water was all out. A " fence " of absorbent cotton, this being merely a square of the cotton with a hole in it the size of the blister, was deftly bound on each heel, the toes treated with ointment and then a pair of Pat's socks, chosen because of their size, slipped on, and Spud announced that he felt as good as new.

The dinner that followed was a jolly affair

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and full justice was done to the bacon and rabbits, washed down with hot cocoa. Afterward Spud told of his adventures as only he could, graphically picturing his sufferings and his unwillingness to admit even to himself that the fault lay in the cherished boots. At the end he suddenly grew very sober.

"I don't see how I am going to keep on, fellows, with those shoes. I feel like a regular cad. Here I am crippled the first day out. You fellows go on. I can rest up to-morrow and then take the back trail to Woodcraft. Those blasted shoes got me into this fix, but I guess they've left a broad enough trail to get me out even if I'm not much of a woodsman. I—I—I'm awfully sorry, fellows. I invited myself on this trip in the first place, and now I've gone and queered it at the start. You fellows go on and I'll go back."

"Desertion in the face of the enemy is high treason, and Private Ely is suspected of intention to desert. Corporal Malone, I order you to place him under guard until we can decide upon a proper punishment," announced Walter without a trace of a smile.

Pat saluted and walking over to where

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Spud lay sprawled out before the fire calmly sat down on the unfortunate youth. "Orders are obeyed, sor, and the prisoner be now under guard," he reported solemnly.

"And now what shall his punishment be?" asked Walter, still keeping a grave face.

"And plaze yer honor, Oi suggest thot he be inshtructed to make a little sunshine, and thot by way av a beginning he sing a solo," replied Pat.

It was promptly voted that Pat's suggestion be put in force, for Spud had a splendid tenor voice. The guard was ordered to release the prisoner and the latter to sing the funniest song he could think of, special privilege being granted him to sit while he sang. At the end another song was demanded, and then more until Spud's vocal chords were in danger of getting as sore as his feet. At last Walter called a halt.

"Private Ely is now restored to good standing," he announced. "Spud," he added, "there's nothing doing on that little scheme of yours, because we can't get along without our cook and sunshine-maker. I guess we all know just how you feel and we appreciate

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your offer to go back. But forget it! We can spend an extra day here without delaying the expedition any, and have a bully good time in the bargain. By day after to-morrow your feet will be in pretty fair shape, and perhaps we can soften up those shoes so that you can wear them. They'll get easy after a few days, anyway, and until they do we'll take an easy pace and make all the hikes short. Now let's turn in and get a good night's sleep."

Pat arose and saluted Upton. "Misther Leader," said he with just a suggestion of a twinkle in his blue eyes, "Oi would like permission to lave camp at sunrise to shoot a pair av moccasins for the sunshine-maker av the Lone Wolves."

Permission was promptly given, though what Pat meant neither Upton nor the others could guess. It was evident that he had something up his sleeve, but no amount of questioning disclosed what it was, and they were forced to turn in still guessing.

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CHAPTER VII

A DAY IN CAMP

THE sun had been above the tree tops an hour when Upton awoke and routed out his three companions. Pat was gone. So was Spud's rifle, and the four Lone Wolves grinned as they noted the fact.

"Bet he's out after a deer," said Spud.

"With a twenty-two rifle? Guess again," retorted Hal.

"He's after those moccasins," said Plympton, "though what he's going to make 'em of is beyond me, unless it's rabbit skins."

"If it was he'd have kept those we had last night, but he didn't," said Upton. "Anyway, let's have breakfast ready when he gets back. Spud, the ground's too cold for you to be fooling around on it with nothing but socks on your feet. You are relieved from all duty this morning."

Spud protested, but he was overruled on the

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ground that the expedition could afford to take no more chances of having him laid up permanently. The fire was soon going, the bacon sputtering cheerfully, and Walter was preparing to toss flap-jacks when the crack of a rifle was heard at no great distance from camp, followed a few minutes later by a second shot, and then two more. Five minutes later Pat stalked into camp from back of the lean-to and dropped a pair of moccasins in front of the astonished Spud, who gaped at them with his jaw dropped foolishly. The others looked scarcely less foolish.

"'Twas good luck Oi was afther having this marning, though ut took four shots to get thim. Sure the shmell av the bacon is teasing me stomach till Oi can't shtand ut another minute! What ails the loikes av yez?" Pat had spoken in the most matter-of-fact tone imaginable at first, and he ended with such a look of innocent surprise, as he appeared to notice for the first time the four vacant faces staring at him, that he was irresistible, and all shouted with laughter.

"Say, you great big son of Saint Patrick, what kind of a steer are you trying to put

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over on us, anyway?" howled Hal, hurling one of Spud's shoes at Pat.

Pat deftly ducked, and his look of surprise gave way to one of outraged innocence. "Shure 'tis a nice reciption Oi do be having, and me taking the throuble av breaking me night's rest to shoot a pair av moccasins to save this expedition from failure," he grumbled.

Meanwhile Spud had been examining the moccasins. He looked at Pat now with sudden suspicion born of a discovery he had made. "Quit your fooling, Pat, and tell us where you got these," he snapped. "They're mine!"

"Shure they're yours. Didn't Oi go shoot thim for ye?" replied Pat.

"I mean they're my old ones—the ones I wore at Woodcraft. Did you have them with you all the time? I believe you did." Spud was busily putting them on.

Pat laughed, a big hearty laugh that was good to hear. "'Tis a good little guesser ye be, and Oi do be having hopes thot we'll be making a real Scout av ye wan av these days," said he. "Mayhap ye will remember

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thot a good Scout is always prepared, and so Oi took the liberty av pinching the moccasins whin ye was packing up at Woodcraft, for Oi knew the evil eye had been cast on thim boots. Oi have guided the loikes av thim in the woods too often not to know what was going to happen, so Oi put the moccasins in me pack. Now will we be afther having a bite to ate? Me stomach ——"

"Wait a minute! What were you shooting at?" interrupted Walter.

Pat stepped back of the lean-to and picked up four grouse, each neatly decapitated by a single shot. "'Tis a little contribution to the joy av ating," he announced as he dropped them at one side of the fire.

Breakfast out of the way it was decided to spend the day hunting, fishing and exploring the surrounding country. Hal and Plympton elected to go fishing. Spud wisely decided to remain in camp to give his feet a rest, and offered his rifle to Walter, who gladly accepted it and started out with Pat in quest of more grouse and rabbits.

"Good luck to you!" shouted Spud. "And oh, Pat, while you are about it you

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might bring us in a deer! A taste of fresh venison would cure my feet!"

Pat had told Hal that he would find the best fishing on the far side of the pond near the entrance to a small cove, and that he would probably find an old raft moored there. He advised taking along some bacon rind for skittering, gravely asserting that "ivery pickerel in the pond be a whale." As Hal had had no luck from shore the night before he and Plympton decided that they would try the cove. They found a rough trail skirting the shore and in due time found the raft. It was water-logged and hardly big enough for two, but they decided that by adding a few small logs it could be made to do. With the aid of their belt axes these were soon secured and added to the raft. Then a couple of long poles were cut to pole it about in shallow water, and with a couple of saplings for rods they were, as Hal expressed it, "ready to go a-whaling."

Cautiously poling out in about seven feet of water they prepared to try their luck. For a while they skittered in vain. Then, as Plympton jumped his piece of bacon rind

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just beyond a patch of pond weed, there was a sudden lunge and he was fast to a big one. Without a reel there was no chance for playing the fish, which with a light rod in his hands is the joy of the fisherman. It was simply a case of strength of line and rod against the strength and weight of the fish with the advantage all in favor of the former. Plympton simply swung the end of the rod around until Hal could get hold of the line and a minute later a five pound pickerel lay on the raft with his spinal cord severed by a cut just back of the head.

Presently Hal caught a smaller one, and then Plympton caught one of about the same size. It was hardly to be called sport in the accepted sense of the word, but it was fun just the same, for on the precarious footing afforded by the overloaded old raft there was excitement enough and to spare. Besides, as Plympton reminded Hal, they were fishing for grub and not just for the fun of catching fish. For a while there were no more strikes and Hal grew impatient.

"There's a big patch of lily-pads over there, and I have a hunch that one of Pat's whales

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is waiting for us," said he. "Do you suppose we can make it?"

By dint of careful poling and some hand paddling when the water became too deep to use the poles they got within casting distance of the pads and Hal stood up for the first cast. The bait had hardly hit the water when it was seized with a rush that made the water boil. Hal struck quick and hard. "I've got him! What did I tell you? He's a whale! A regular old granddaddy whale!" he yelled as the fish made a lunge that threatened to yank the pole out of his hands. "Quick, Sister! Get hold of that line!"

Alas for the shortness of human memory! In his excitement Hal forgot where he was and stepped backward to bring the line within reach of Plympton's outstretched hand. A loose log rolled under his foot and with a mighty splash Hal went overboard. Nor was this all. Relieved of Hal's weight the raft abruptly tilted in the opposite direction and Plympton, already almost off his balance in his anxiety to reach the line, took a header with neatness and dispatch. Fortunately both were good swimmers, and it was the

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work of but a few minutes to scramble back on the raft, where they sat grinning at each other in idiotic fashion.

"Phew!" gasped Plympton when he could get his breath. "That water's cold."

"And the air's colder," sputtered Hal, his teeth beginning to chatter. "We've got to get a hump on ourselves and get back to camp before we get our deaths. And we didn't get that fish to show for it, and he was a regular old sockdollager!" he ended with a wail.

There was a heavy splash behind him and Plympton made a sudden grab that came within an ace of dumping them both in the water again. "He's fast yet!" he yelled. "Quick, Hal! The line's caught around the end of that log, but it will be off in a minute!"

Sure enough, the line was fast. It had caught with a half turn around the end of one of the logs of the raft when Hal had dropped his rod in his sudden plunge overboard, and now the big fish was splashing and lunging in a way that threatened to tear the hook loose if it didn't jerk the line free. Hal clutched at

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it frantically, and he was none too soon, for even as his fingers closed on it it slipped off the log. Hand over hand the big fish was pulled in until they could look into his great gaping mouth with its myriad wicked looking teeth. The bait had been swallowed and the hook was fast in his gullet, or he would have torn loose before this. Very gingerly, for he had no mind to have his hand torn by those vicious teeth, Plympton reached down and slipped his fingers into the gills. Then with a quick yank he landed the prize on the raft, where he was speedily put out of misery, and also all chance of escape, by a knife thrust through the spinal column.

"Whoopee!" yelled Hal. "He'll go ten pounds if he'll go an ounce! Isn't he a beaut? Now it's us for shore and a good big fire. Br-r-r-r! We'll freeze to death if we don't hustle! But it's worth it, eh, Sister?"

"You bet!" grinned Plympton, his teeth chattering in spite of his efforts to prevent them.

The exercise of paddling and poling warmed them up a little, and shore was reached without further mishap. Then with the fish

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strung on a stout stick between them they started for camp at the best pace the rough going would permit.

It was a little past noon when they reached there, and they found Spud making preparations for dinner. He heard them coming and without looking up from his task growled: "Hurry up, you fellows. I suppose you've got some fish. We need 'em, for somehow there doesn't seem to be any too much bacon. I thought we had four slabs, and I can't find but one besides the one we've cut into. A pretty kind of a commissary you are, Hal, to stock us short on the only meat we're sure of." Then he looked up and for a full minute stared at the fish and then at the bedraggled figures.

"Jerusalem crickets!" he gasped. "Do you have to go in swimming after fish in this country? Because if you do little Spud is going to stick to rabbits. That's a rip-snorter of a pickerel, all right, and by the look of you I bet he dragged you all over the pond. Some fishermen you are!" Then noticing for the first time that they were shivering, for at that altitude September winds are not exactly

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balmy, Spud forgot sarcasm in his desire to do something for their comfort. He had not forgotten their consideration of him the night before.

"Strip off those duds and wrap up in blankets! You can be heap big Injuns while I get a fire going to dry out things." Spud spoke with an air of command.

Hal began to say something about dressing the fish, but Spud cut him short. "Cut it! Cut it!" he snapped. "I was left in charge of this camp, and you take orders from me, see? Off with those duds now!"

He soon had a good fire going and, improvising a clothes-line from the coil of rope, hung the wet garments to dry. The moccasins he stuffed with dry grass and put them out where sun and air would have a chance at them. Plympton noticed this and nudged Hal. "Remember the time you hung your moccasins to dry by the fire and they burst all the stitches?" he murmured.

"Shall I ever forget it?" replied Hal laughing. "Spud's got the subject of feet very much on his mind just now and doesn't intend to let the rest of us get in trouble with

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foot-gear. It will take time to dry 'em out that way, but it's the only way if we want to keep 'em reasonably soft."

With dry underwear and stockings, and wrapped in their blankets, Hal and Plympton were soon squatting in comfort before the fire while at a little cooking fire off to one side Spud was preparing to fry the smaller fish, for which purpose he had cut them in convenient pieces.

"How about the whale—when do we get him?" called Hal.

"To-night, baked à la Spud Ely," replied the cook, deftly turning the pan biscuit that were to accompany the fish.

Pat and Upton now put in their appearance, one rabbit being their sole contribution to the larder as a result of their morning hunt. Of course they instantly demanded the cause of the camp's wash-day appearance, and long and hearty was the laugh as Plympton drolly described the "whaling trip" and drew a graphic word picture of the catastrophe. Pat fairly hugged himself in delight.

"Misther Leader, Oi move thot a complate account of the catching av a whale be ordered

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written in the official report av this expedition," said he.

"No you don't!" shouted Hal.

"Not unless an account of Spud's getting lost goes too!" protested Plympton.

It was Spud's turn to howl now, and he did it long and loud. "What do you fellows think the Big Chief will think of me if he hears about that?" he wailed. "A fine kind of a Scout he'll say I am, I don't think! I move that the records contain only an account of the trail and the country we pass through."

"Hear! Hear!" shouted Hal and Plympton. "Put it to a vote, Mr. Leader."

"This is a matter for the commanding officer to decide, and not for a vote by the patrol," announced Walter. "It is herewith ordered that Scout Plympton make a complete and detailed report of all events, haps, mishaps, and doings of the Lone Wolves day by day, and this order is irrevocable."

"You wait!" mumbled Spud. "You just wait! We'll get something on you yet, and then you'll wish you hadn't."

The lusciously browned fish and the hot biscuit were soon disposed of. It was while

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the dishes were being washed that Hal suddenly remembered Spud's remark as he and Plympton had approached with the fish. "By the way, Spud," he called, "what were those reflections you were casting on my abilities as commissary?"

"I said, or I meant to say, that it is a darned poor commissary that stocks an expedition short on supplies, and we're short on bacon, if I know anything about it," retorted Spud.

"No such thing!" Hal spoke with some heat. "I ordered, bought and paid for four slabs of bacon and saw it packed, and that ought to be enough for two weeks. You better use your eyes before you go to knocking others."

"That's just what I did do—till they ached, and you've got to put on a pair of double compound magnifying glasses and see double if you find more than one slab besides the one we've been cutting from," retorted Spud.

The heated discussion drew the others, and the situation was quickly explained.

"Hal's right," asserted Walter. "I checked up the supplies myself and there were four

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slabs of bacon. Probably the missing ones have been misplaced and Spud overran the trail."

This sly thrust at Spud produced a grin from all but that astute young man.

"All right," he growled. "Show me the bacon and I'll eat humble pie for the rest of this trip."

At once all hands but the disgruntled Spud joined in a general overhauling of the supplies and then a thorough search of the camp, even to the emptying of the individual packs, but without result.

"What did I tell you?" Spud grinned maliciously. "Overran the trail, did I? Well, there are others!"

"But that bacon was here this morning when I cooked breakfast, for I saw it," insisted Walter. "If any one is trying to put across a joke it's time to call it off right now," he added.

But each in turn protested that he knew nothing about the missing meat.

"This is serious," said Walter. "If supplies are going to walk off of their own accord right under our noses it's time we got busy

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and put a stop to it. What did you do while we were away from camp, Spud?"

"Took it easy in the lean-to as per orders until it was time to start things for dinner," replied Spud promptly.

"Didn't leave camp at all?"

"No."

"Sleep?"

Spud flushed slightly. "Well, maybe I dozed off, but not for more'n half an hour," he confessed, then added defensively, "I didn't know I was supposed to be doing guard duty."

"That's all right, Spud. You weren't supposed to be on guard, because I didn't suppose a guard was needed way off up here. I'd have taken a nap if I had been in your place. Had any visitors?"

"Nope."

"Then, fellows, it's clear to me that that bacon walked, ran or flew away while Spud was asleep, and the thing for us to do is to find out how. What is your opinion, corporal?" Walter turned to Pat.

"Thot some varmint has sneaked out of the woods and helped himself, though what ut

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may be Oi don't know at all, at all, unless it be a bear, and the boldest av thim would hardly be walking into a camp in broad daylight at this season av the year. A fool porcupine might do ut for the love av the salt, but if he did he would be laving a trail aisy to follow. Oi'll take a bit av a look about for tracks."

A careful scrutiny of the ground in the immediate vicinity of the camp failed to reveal any tracks save of a venturesome mink, and these Pat asserted were made in the night, for he had noticed them when he got up at daylight. Nor were there any evidences that the meat had been dragged over the ground. It was a mystery for which there seemed no explanation. While the others had been hunting for tracks Spud had quietly checked up supplies. When he had finished his inventory he hailed Walter.

"Mr. Leader," he called, "have you got the original list of supplies?"

"No," replied Upton. "I returned it to the commissary. Why?"

"Looks to me as if a piece of salt pork had gone with the bacon. I was going to suggest

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that we check off with the original list and make allowances for what we have eaten," said Spud.

"Good idea! Hal, dig out that list of supplies and check off with Spud," ordered Upton.

This was done, Hal calling off and Spud checking on his list. Beyond the bacon things tallied until Hal read "Three packages of crackers."

"Two," reported Spud.

"Sure of that?" asked Walter sharply.

"Count 'em yourself; it isn't difficult," replied Spud, pointing to the two boxes.

"Eight packages of raisins," read Hal.

"Six here, and one we ate yesterday," reported Spud.

The others now crowded close to look over the shoulders of the two checkers as if to make sure that no error was made. When the checking was finished it showed that in addition to the missing bacon, crackers and raisins, a piece of pork and a quantity of evaporated apricots had also vanished. The Lone Wolves looked at each other blankly.

"What kind of a critter would eat apricots and raisins?" asked Plympton slowly.

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"A two-legged wan! There be varmints and varmints, and the worse kind walks on two legs, but Oi didn't drame thot there was any of thot kind in these woods," said Pat promptly. "'Tis thracks widout claws thot we do be best looking for now, Misther Leader. We'd best look afther our personal stuff and see if any of that be gone."

A hasty inventory of equipment showed nothing missing, much to their relief. Then Walter issued orders. Hal and Plympton were to remain in camp until their clothes and moccasins were thoroughly dry. He himself, Pat and Spud, would scout around the little clearing for signs. Under no conditions was the camp to be left unguarded for a minute. There was some grumbling on the part of the unlucky fishermen, who were anxious to share in the excitement of the hunt, but there was no help for it, and they were forced to make the best of the situation.

The others agreed that each should take a third section of an imaginary circle of which the camp was the center and, figuratively speaking, "scrape it with a fine tooth comb." When he had covered his assigned territory if

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nothing had been discovered each was to take the next adjacent section. Thus the entire circle would be covered three times. An hour's patient search revealed nothing and each had started in on his third section. This brought Spud along the edge of the pond where Hal and Plympton had taken the trail to the cove that morning. Their tracks, both going and coming, were plain to see and he hardly gave them a passing glance. He had started to cut across the trail and work his way up into the woods as Walter and Pat had already done, when a sudden impulse led him to turn aside and follow the cove trail for a short distance, studying the footprints where they were visible in the soft earth, which in places was little more than swamp muck.

Now with all his fun-loving, easy-going disposition Spud possessed one trait for which he was not always given the credit deserved. This was a bulldog tenacity of purpose. Once he had set his mind to do a thing he hung on until the thing was done or he had proved to his own satisfaction that he couldn't do it. The trouble with Spud was that he seldom set his mind to anything and so was careless and

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not often taken seriously. The problem with him was to thoroughly arouse his interest. In the present instance it was aroused. He had felt more keenly than the others realized his carelessness in overrunning the trail the day before. Also he blamed himself, though the others did not, for sleeping that morning and thus giving the thief a chance. He wanted to prove to his companions, but to himself more, that he was not so poor a Scout as he appeared, and so he had thrown himself into this search for signs of the thief with all the powers of concentration he possessed.

Almost automatically he noted the difference in the length of strides in the outgoing and incoming trails of the two fishermen. "In some hurry getting back to camp," he chuckled. "Hm-m, somebody was off stride here," he continued, talking to himself. "That print falls right in the middle of Hal's stride and—say, it looks to me as if there'd been three people along here! Wonder if Pat was over here this morning."

He frowned down at the puzzling trail, then broke a stick from a sapling and carefully measured a print he knew to be Hal's and

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then the odd one. The latter was a quarter of an inch longer. It wasn't Plympton's because the latter's were considerably shorter. It didn't seem big enough for one of Pat's, but to make sure he retraced his steps to a point where he had noticed a fresh print left by Pat at the water's edge when he had covered that section.

"I thought so!" he muttered. "Now we'll see, Mr. Thief, if you went back the way you came."

He returned to the trail to the cove and followed it far enough to be convinced that the strange prints all headed toward the camp and none returned. At one place he found a particularly clear print where the ground was sandy rather than muddy. This he studied with care.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "That fellow had a patch on the sole of his right moccasin. Now I guess I'm ready to report."

He found the others at camp and knew by the glum looks that they had found nothing. At first they were inclined to think that Spud had allowed his imagination to run away with

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him, but when he led Walter and Pat to the trail and pointed out the prints they were forced to believe.

"The bye is roight," said Pat. "The varmint came this way, but he didn't return, and thot manes thot he wint some other way. Misther Leader, if ye will say the worrd Oi will be taking a look along the trail we came in by yesterday and ut may be Oi will find something."

Of course the word was said, and Pat set out on the back trail while the others discussed the day's events and wondered if they would receive another visit from the thief, and who he could be. In about an hour Pat returned, and they knew by his broad smile that he had news.

"The trail was too dry to show prints, but a half mile back Oi found cracker crumbs where the bloody thafe had had a lunch," he announced. "'Tis clear in me mind now. A bit beyant the cove there is a trail over to the Gillicuddy lumber camp some ten miles to the east. A thaving lumber-jack widout sinse av honor happened along on his way out this marning and helped himsilf, or maybe 'twas

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a hunter, bad cess to him. Anyway, he hit the trail, and we'll see no more av him."

This seemed a logical explanation of the mystery and the subject was dropped, though not until Spud had been given due credit for his clever work.

"Mr. Leader, does that go in the records?" he asked gravely.

"It sure does, and I hereby give the order," declared Walter, while all hands grinned.

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CHAPTER VIII

SMUGGLERS' HOLLOW

THE Lone Wolves were on the trail shortly after sunrise the next morning. There was a hike of nearly twenty miles ahead of them if they were to make Smugglers' Hollow that day, and this they wanted to do if Spud's feet would stand it. He insisted that they were as good as ever, and he dared Pat to set a pace that he couldn't follow. But Walter promptly nipped such foolishness in the bud. There is an old saying, and a true one, that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. In the same way the efficiency of a body of men on the march is in proportion to the number of disabled members who must be cared for. A wise leader at all times regards the welfare of his men, and jealously watches to see that they are as nearly fit as possible. Upton therefore gave orders that the pace should be an easy one, with frequent halts, believing that

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in this way the distance could be covered without serious inconvenience to Spud.

As a matter of fact the day of rest had put the sore feet in fairly good condition. With the heels "fenced" with cotton to prevent possible rubbing up of the skin where the blisters had been, and with the broad roomy toes and soft leather of the moccasins Spud experienced little discomfort and stoutly asserted that he could walk as far and fast as any one. The fateful boots dangled on the outside of his pack, for there was no room inside for them. At first he had insisted that he would "fire the darned things into the pond." Afterward he offered to give them to whoever would carry them, declaring that they never would go on his feet again. Then Upton ordered him to carry them himself, saying that as he had insisted on bringing them contrary to the advice of the others he must take them through.

"Eight dollars!" moaned Spud, as he prepared to obey orders. "Eight dollars for two blistered heels and four skinned toes! When I get home I'll hang them on the wall of my room as a dreadful object lesson in pigheaded-

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ness. Oh, but I'd like to knock together the heads of the man who made those shoes and the one who sold them to Dad and told him that they were just what his little boy wanted!"

"Well, weren't they? You seemed to think so when you got them," said Plympton.

"They look to me like very good shoes. I don't see anything the matter with 'em," remarked Hal.

"Oh, they're bully shoes! There's only one trouble with 'em—they were not made to wear," growled Spud.

"Wrong as usual," commented Walter. "The shoes are all right. All they need is proper breaking in, but a twenty mile tramp the first time is no way to do it. When they get shaped to your feet and limbered up you'll find 'em bully for use in tramping in the country around home, and I'll bet a year from now you'll be swearing by 'em as vigorously as you're growling at 'em now. Cut it out and fall in! Hal, you are rear-guard to-day."

The trail lay along the edge of the pond. In fact, it was the same trail that Hal and Plympton had taken to the cove after

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"whales." Just beyond the cove it forked, one fork bearing to the east and the other continuing within sight of the pond and bearing to the north. The eastern trail was the one Pat had mentioned as leading to the lumber camp, and they stopped at the junction to see if they could find any traces of their unwelcome visitor of the day before. But the ground was hard and dry, so that it would take no imprint, so little time was wasted in looking for one. The incident was regarded as closed, and they pushed on along the trail to the north.

It was a perfect early fall morning, clear, crisp and invigorating. Through the trees they caught glimpses of Little Goose Pond, as clear as a mirror, not so much as a ripple marring its surface. Near the upper end the trail suddenly emerged into a little opening, affording an unobstructed view of the pond. On the edge of this Pat stopped abruptly and silently signaled the others to approach cautiously. Then with a nod of his head he drew their attention to the farther shore of a tiny cove which made in toward the trail at this point. Standing with her fore feet in the

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water was a beautiful doe drinking, and back of her and a little to one side two fawns. It was a beautiful picture, an idealistic glimpse of wilderness home life. For a few minutes the five boys stood motionless drinking in the full beauty of the wilderness scene. Then slowly, steadily, Pat lifted his rifle. For a few seconds it was poised as steady as if held in a vice, and with eyes wide with excitement and holding their breath the four boys behind him waited for the report.

"Bang!" It was not the expected crack of the rifle, but Pat's voice. Instantly the doe threw up her head, big ears forward, startled eyes scanning the shore, and sensitive nostrils vainly trying the air for scent of danger. Then Pat took a step forward. The doe caught the movement, whirled, and with a sharp whistle bounded into the brush, the fawns following, the white flags of all three showing for a few jumps and then vanishing in the thick undergrowth.

"Aw, Pat, what did you do that for?"

"Why didn't you shoot?"

"A nice fellow you are, when you know we are short of meat!"

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Pat grinned good-humoredly as he listened to the chorus of expostulations.

"Why didn't Oi shoot? In the first place 'twas a doe with fawns by her side, and Pat Malone is not wan to make orphans av the innocent. 'Tis a poor sportsman thot will kill a doe anyway, unless he nades the meat more than we do. In the second place what would we have done with her if Oi had killed her? Tell me thot."

"Why, we would have had meat enough to have lasted us for the rest of the trip," growled Spud.

"And would ye have volunteered to carry a hundred pounds or more the betther part of twenty miles?" asked Pat.

"Well, we could have cut out a few steaks and carried them without any trouble," protested Spud.

"And would ye take the loife av wan av the most beautiful av God's cratures for the sake av a few bits av meat, and lave the rest to rot, doing no wan any good?" demanded Pat, a glint of indignation showing in his blue eyes. "Shure 'tis all stomach and no heart at all ye have."

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Spud flushed slightly. "I—I—didn't think of it that way," he confessed. "You're right, Pat. It would—well, I guess it would have been something like murder. I'll never forget that scene, but I guess if you'd shot the doe I'd have wanted to because later I'd have thought of those fawns. Say, fellows"—Spud was very earnest, as he always was when thoroughly aroused—"I've had the best lesson in sportsmanship I've ever had or ever expect to have, and I'll never forget it. I've never shot a deer, and I've always wanted to. And I've never been with any one before when there was a chance to shoot one. When I saw that doe I was too excited to think of anything but the chance to kill. If I'd been alone I'd have shot. Perhaps I'd have been sorry afterward and maybe I wouldn't, because if I had made a successful shot I'd have been too tickled to think of anything else. But Pat has taught me the difference between a butcher and a sportsman, and when I get my first deer it's going to be a buck, and the reward of an honest hunt, and not mere chance."

The glint in Pat's eyes softened to a twinkle. "The buck's waiting for ye at Shmugglers'

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Hollow this very minut, and 'tis Pat Malone will lead ye to him," said he.

"Tell us, Pat, if that had been a mother lynx with two young would you have shot?" inquired Plympton.

"As quick as Oi could have pulled the trigger!" replied Pat with emphasis.

"How about the orphans in that case?" asked Hal.

"Oi'd have done me best to put them out av mournin' for their lost mother, but anyway the varmints could have taken care av thimselves, bad cess to 'em," responded Pat. "A she lynx be a divil and the mother av divils, and whinever was ut a crime to give the divil his dues?"

A general laugh at Pat's vehemence followed as the Lone Wolves prepared to hit the trail again. But as they followed the lead of the big Irish lad each of the others felt in his heart that the young woodsman had set an example in honorable conduct, mercy and true sportsmanship that never would be forgotten, and that in later years would bear fruit. There were four better sportsmen for the incident at Little Goose Pond.

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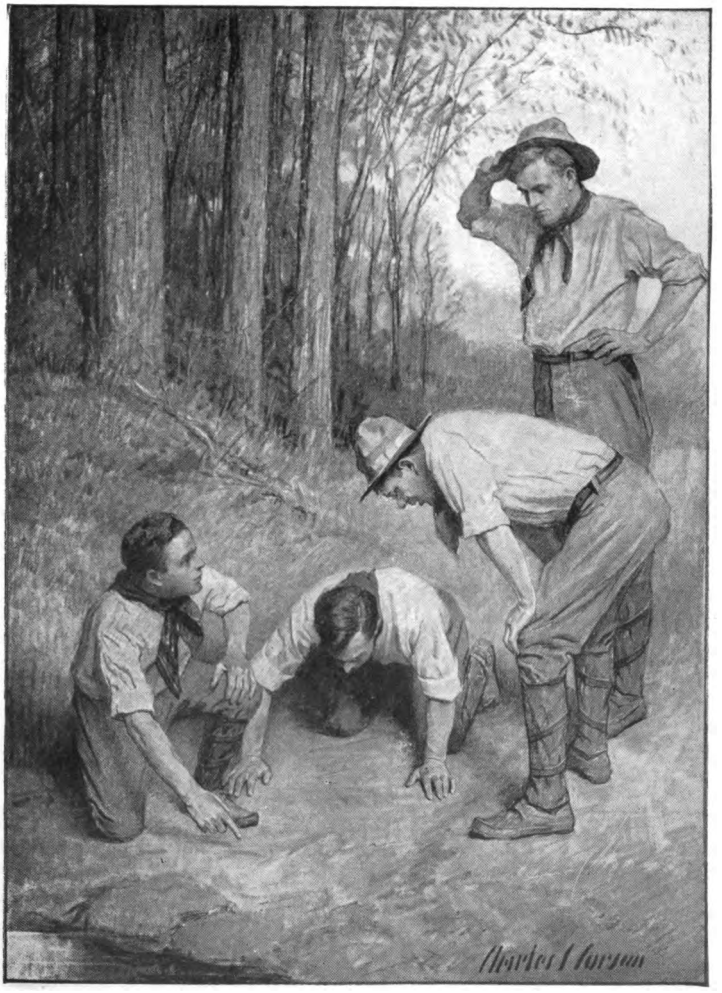

THE PRINT SHOWED CLEARLY

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The trail proved to be as blind as on the day when Spud was lost. At times in low places there was a perceptible path, but even there it would have been difficult for a novice to have said whether it was man-made or an old deer-run. On higher ground it disappeared altogether and the blazed trees were the only guide. Occasionally Pat would point out a comparatively fresh blaze as one he had made on his last trip that way. A halt was made beside a brook for rest and lunch. It was there that Spud further redeemed himself as a first class Scout. He had gone to a near-by spring for water.

"Hi, fellows!" he shouted. "Our friend of yesterday has been along here. Here's a print of that patched moccasin!"

The others hurried for a look at Spud's find. There was no doubt about it. The print showed clearly in the soft earth by the spring. Pat scowled down at it thoughtfully.

"'Twas not from the Gillicuddy camp thot the varmint was coming, then," he growled. "'Twas from the Hollow. Oi wonder now what was he doing way off up here, and be there any more av his kind there now. 'Tis

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not loikely thot a man would be off here alone. Ut may be thot we will find a hunting party at the Hollow, and thot this fellow has gone out for supplies."

This was a disturbing thought, and took the edge off the enjoyment of the lunch. Spud's feet were giving him no trouble, and so it was decided to push on faster than had been planned. If the Hollow was occupied they would go on to another camping ground of which Pat knew a couple of miles to the west.

"We'll do a little scouting when we reach the Hollow and see how the land lies. If there is anybody there we don't like the looks of we'll give 'em a wide berth without showing ourselves," announced Walter. "I hope to goodness there isn't anybody there."

The trail now lay along a hardwood ridge, all second growth, where Spud was given a chance to prove his marksmanship when they ran into a flock of grouse. An old cock bird flew to the top of a stump not ten yards distant, where with neck stretched and head turned slightly toward them he stood as if carved from a part of the stump itself. The

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twenty-two cracked, and Spud sprang forward with a whoop of delight to pick up the fluttering prize.

"Now, will you fellows make fun of my shooting?" he demanded as he held up the handsome bird in triumph.

To his surprise, and to the surprise of the others as well, Pat shook his head in disapproval as he examined the bird. "'Twas no shot at all; me baby brother could do as well," he announced. "For why did ye shoot him through the body?"

"Well, where should I shoot him if not through the body?" demanded Spud indignantly. "Didn't I kill him? What more do you want?"

"Shure ye killed him, but 'twas just plain murther. What chance did the poor bur-rd have? And me having such great hopes av ye, me bye." Pat spoke with such mournfulness that even the exasperated Spud was forced to smile.

"All right, Mr. Smarty. Suppose you show me how to do it on the next one," he retorted.

"Oi will thot!" replied Pat promptly, and threw forward his rifle. His keen eyes had

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noted one of the scattered covey running in the undergrowth, for the birds had not been frightened by the crack of the little twenty-two. Now as it paused in an open place some thirty-five yards away to look and listen the big thirty-thirty rang out. The bird dropped, fluttered an instant and lay still. Spud rushed forward to pick it up. It was headless. Pat grinned at Spud's expression.

"'Tis the way we all kill the bur-rds up here, and ye would be laughed out av camp did ye bring in wan shot any other way unless ye took him on the wing," he explained. "There be few in the woods with anything smaller than a rifle big enough for deer, and what would there be left but a bunch av feathers with wan av these big bullets tearing through the body? Ye must learn to shoot their heads off before ye may qualify as a shot in the big woods. The bur-rds are by way av being weak in their topknots anyway, and are most accommodating in sittin' shtill."

"You wouldn't do that down in the lower country near the towns, Pat," said Walter. "And there's no weakness in their topknots, either. There's no sitting for you there.

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They're about the quickest, smartest bird that flies, and it's a good man that can get three out of five with a shotgun. I suppose that shows the effect of environment on the habits of wild creatures. Up here grouse are seldom molested, because everybody is after bigger game, and so they have little fear of man and seem stupid. Where they are much hunted they are shy, quick to take wing and sharp enough to take advantage of every bit of cover. Well, it looks now as if we shouldn't miss that bacon much. We've got six grouse and a rabbit, and that ought to keep us from starving for a day or so."

Hal's big fish had furnished dinner the night before, and the game had been brought along to celebrate the making of camp in Smugglers' Hollow. A bit farther on another covey of grouse was started, and this time Spud really did distinguish himself. The first shot was a clean miss, but the bird did not take fright, giving Spud a second chance. This time he scored, and under the most trying conditions, for it was with all hands watching and ready to jolly him unmercifully if he failed.

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The trail now led through a heavy stand of young spruce, cut a burned over lumber slash, dipped through a swamp where the boys sank above their ankles in black muck, followed a broiling brook for a mile or more, then abruptly swung off at right angles over a hill, across a wooded valley and then for some distance ran straight east along the foot of the hill on the other side. Walter was just about to remark that they seemed to be going in the wrong direction when Pat once more turned northward and headed straight for what appeared to be the highest part of the range of hills.

"Gee!" panted Spud. "Have we got to climb that?"

The trail climbed gradually, and then suddenly dipped into a narrow pass or break in the hills which from below had not been visible.

"'Tis the entrance to Shmugglers' Hollow," announced Pat as they paused for breath. "Oi suggest, Misther Leader, thot we leave our packs here and climb to the top av yonder hill. We can get a fair view av the Hollow, and ut may be thot we can tell if any wan be there."

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This suggestion met with the approval of all. The packs were cached under a low spreading hemlock off to one side of the trail and, freed of their burdens, the boys made light work of climbing the hill. As Pat had promised, they were afforded an excellent view of the Hollow. It was almost circular in shape, appeared to be wholly surrounded by mountains and, to quote Hal, "looked as if it had been made by a giant fist jammed down into the earth's surface while it was soft." There appeared to be no openings to it through the hills, though Pat assured them that he knew of two besides the pass below, and there might be more. In the middle was what had once been a clearing, but this was now overgrown with brush, which almost hid an old log cabin. Here and there could be caught the glimmer of a brook, and its course could be traced by the fringe of alders. Directly across the Hollow rose the steep slopes of a mountain heavily clothed with a splendid stand of spruce and pine, which gave to it a most somber and forbidding aspect. The declining sun picked out in vivid splashes of red and yellow a few early turned maples and

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birches in the Hollow itself and on the lower slopes of the mountains. Altogether it was as wild and lonely a scene as could well be imagined.

For a few minutes the boys stood in silence and something very like awe, instinctively feeling that here brooded the very spirit of the wilderness. It was Pat who brought them back to the matter immediately in hand. "There's where the shmugglers put up their foight, and a grand foight ut was while ut lasted, Oi'm told," said he, "but Oi don't see any signs av shmugglers or any wan else. There's no shmoke from the cabin. Shall we go down and investigate, Mr. Leader?"

"I guess there's nothing else to do," replied Walter, and gave the order to return for the packs.

Once more on the trail it was but a matter of twenty minutes of brisk walking to bring them to the entrance to the Hollow. It was decided that Pat should go on and scout around the cabin to see what he could discover, the others to remain where they were until he reported. In about three-quarters of an hour he returned.

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"No wan there," said he, "though Oi'm thinking there has been within two days, for there be feathers av grouse scattered about, and the shmell av shmoke is still strong in the fireplace. Ut looks to me as if some wan had been living there, but they're gone now, and we may as well move in."

This was in a way welcome news, though it would have been more welcome had Pat found no traces of recent occupancy. The packs were once more shouldered and the Lone Wolves were soon in Smugglers' Hollow and at the end of their day's march. The cabin was found to be habitable, but that was all. It was in a most dilapidated state. The roof at one end had fallen in, but over the four bunks it was whole, and this promised reasonably dry sleeping if the weather should turn bad. There was no door and the windows were but a memory if, indeed, there ever had been any. But who wants doors and windows when camping? The floor was littered with dirt. The edges of the box bunks had been gnawed to splinters by porcupines, and there were evidences that the cabin was not unknown to other denizens of the woods.

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Walter issued orders briskly. "Sister, you will clean out the cabin. Hal, you cut balsam for the bunks. Pat will get fire-wood—some good big logs, Pat—and Spud and I will hustle dinner."

At once each sprang to his task with a will, and the camp presented a scene of cheerful activity. It is wonderful what a little cleaning will do in the most hopeless looking place. When Plympton had picked up the litter on the floor and swept it with a hemlock bough and had filled the bunks with the fragrant balsam brought by Hal the interior of the cabin seemed transformed. It needed only the snap and merry crackle and the leaping flames of the fire in the fireplace to dispel the last lingering sense of depression. There is no place so desolate that the dancing flames of a camp-fire will not bring to it something of cheer and comfort.

Outside Spud squatted beside a bed of glowing hardwood coals. Above these, each on a green-wood spit supported on forked sticks driven into the ground on either side of the fire, five grouse were roasting, while from a pot-hook hung a kettle of steaming pea soup,

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made from the erbswurst. Spud was in his element and his clear tenor voice was good to hear as he sang, alternately turning the spits to insure an even roasting of the birds and keep the juices from running out. Occasionally he basted them with a piece of fat pork impaled on the end of a stick.

It was a royal dinner that followed, and after this was out of the way and the camp put in order for the night the Lone Wolves gathered around the huge camp-fire while Plympton graphically retold the tale of the taking of the smugglers at this very spot. When he had finished they sat for some time gazing into the dancing flames and seeing there reënacted the stirring scenes the old cabin had witnessed when it was the stronghold of outlaws. When the flames had died down to glowing embers Walter broke the spell with an abrupt order for all hands to turn in.

"Are you going to post a guard?" inquired Spud.

"I guess it isn't necessary," laughed Walter. "I hardly think we are likely to have visitors."

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CHAPTER IX

A MIDNIGHT SCARE

THE four bunks were arranged two on each side, one above another, in the same way as in a sleeping car. As there were five in the patrol it was self-evident that some one must bunk on the floor, and there was a good-natured argument as to who it should be. Pat settled the matter by calmly rolling up in his blanket on the pile of balsam which had been spread at the rear of the cabin. Plympton took the upper bunk on one side, with Spud in the lower bunk under him. Hal took the other upper, leaving the lower for Walter.

Sleep comes quickly in the woods. The boys were tired with that splendid healthy fatigue that comes from active exercise out-of-doors, and the good-nights were hardly said before all five were plunged in the deep, dreamless sleep of vigorous youth and save for the faint flicker of the dying embers in the

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fireplace the interior of the little cabin was wrapped in darkness. With a final effort the last ember flared up, flickered for an instant, and went out. Save for the measured breathing of the sleepers there was nothing to denote that the cabin was not as lonely and deserted as was its wont.

Walter had been asleep some hours when, without apparent cause, he awoke. For a few minutes he lay in that condition of comfortable drowsiness which is the borderland of sleep and wakefulness. He was conscious of a half defined feeling that something had wakened him, but his senses were not sufficiently aroused to produce more than a vague wonder as to what it could have been. He could see a star twinkling down at him through a hole in the roof. The mingled scent of fresh balsam and wood smoke filled his nostrils pleasantly. From outside came faint sounds scarcely distinguishable, the voices of the wilderness night. A rabbit thumped somewhere beyond the faint patch of lesser darkness which he knew to be the doorway and was answered by a thump from the rear. A stick snapped sharply, followed by a scurry of

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little feet as the rabbits sought safety from some unseen danger. He had listened to such sounds many times before and in them found one of the great charms of living in the open, the mystery of throbbing life on all sides, unseen but ever present.

Presently he became aware of a rustling and a sound as of claws. It seemed close at hand and as if inside rather than outside the cabin. His senses more alert now, he realized that this was what had roused him and furthermore that the sounds proceeded from under his bed, which was not more than two feet above the floor. Thinking it some small animal who had become over-inquisitive, and not wishing to disturb the others, Walter reached down quickly with one hand, intending to get a moccasin and hurl it under the bunk to drive the intruder out. A second later a wild yell electrified the sleepers into sudden and disastrous action. Spud, forgetting where he was, sat up abruptly, or rather started to, but banged his head against the bunk above so hard that he fell back dazed for the time being.

Hal, wakened from sound sleep and still

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confused, attempted to leap from his bunk before freeing himself wholly from his blanket, with the result that he pitched headlong to the floor and emitted a yell second only to the one that had roused the camp. Pat had leaped to his feet at the first yell, and thinking that they had been attacked by thieves, with a roar of "Leave me at thim!" lunged toward a form he could dimly see framed against the doorway, and which happened to be Plympton, who had landed on the floor without mishap and was trying to get his scattered wits together. It was lucky for him that Pat tripped over Hal and came heavily to the floor, where he promptly grappled with Hal until, recognizing that unfortunate's voice, he desisted from his efforts to cram a corner of the blanket down his throat.

By this time Walter succeeded in making himself heard. "It's all right, Pat! There's nobody here!" he shouted.

"Then what in the name av mud is all the throuble about?" roared Pat, releasing Hal and struggling to his feet. "Where be the matches? Somebody shtrike a loight."

This Plympton succeeded in doing just as

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Pat spoke, and a second later found and lighted a candle. It was a weird scene that was presented in the dim light—Pat standing in his underclothes, his fists clinched and his eyes still blazing with the light of battle; Hal sprawled on the floor, his expression one of mingled anger and pain; Walter sitting on the edge of his bunk holding his right wrist tightly in his left hand and with his face drawn with pain; Spud just crawling from his bunk muttering unintelligible threats while one hand was pressed to his head; Plympton holding aloft the candle and gazing stupidly at the others.

"What does ut mane? In the name av the sivin saints, tell me, what does ut mane?" roared Pat again.

"Something bit me in the hand and I hollered, that's all," replied Walter with a feeble attempt at a grin.

"And it bit me, and by Jingo, it hurts like sixty every time I move," added Hal.

Walter now advanced where the light fell full on the wounded hand and for a full minute all stared at it dumbly while there slowly dawned a realization of what had been the

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cause of their fright and resulting mishaps. Pat was the first to find his tongue.

"A quill-pig! A whole patrol av brave Scouts scared out av their sinses, and me wan av thim, by a quill-pig!" he muttered, wonder and disgust mingling in his voice.

It was true. There in the outstretched hand were a full dozen of the barbed quills of a porcupine. Evidently he had just come out from under the bunk as Walter reached for the moccasin and the boy had thrust his hand against the ever ready needle-pointed quills. The sudden pain and fright had led him to think that he had been bitten.

Pat at once assumed charge. More candles were lighted, and while Walter winced with pain Pat, with a deft twist, the result of experience, extracted the wicked little barbs. They had penetrated deeply, and it was necessary to take the utmost care not to break them off, leaving the barbs in the flesh. In such a case serious results might ensue. The quill of a porcupine is so constructed that once it has penetrated the flesh it continually works its way deeper. For this reason the sooner it is extracted the better.

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At last they were all out, the wounded hand disinfected and bandaged and Pat was ready for another victim.

"Next!" he called. "Shtep roight this way if ye would consult Docther Malone."

Four quills were found protruding from Hal's thigh. In his fall he had brushed against the porcupine, the quills catching in his underwear and then penetrating the flesh as he rolled on the floor.

Spud, meanwhile, had been giving himself first aid, bathing his forehead with cold water. He had received a nasty bump, and it was already beginning to swell and show discoloration.

"A piece of raw lean meat would keep that from discoloring, but we haven't got it, and I guess you'll be a beaut by to-morrow," said Walter as he examined the bump.

"Oi have ut!" exclaimed Pat. "Shure 'tis auld Docther Malone will cure yez or kill yez, whichever be the aisiest, and this toime 'tis a cure, Oi be thinking."

With this Pat disappeared, but in a few minutes returned with a strip of raw meat cut from the flank of the rabbit which they had not yet cooked.

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"Oi have heard av wearing a rabbit's foot for luck, but this is the first toime, begorra, Oi iver heard av rabbit leg for the headache. But 'twas raw mate ye wanted, and lean, and this is both, so ut ought to do the thrick," commented Pat as it was bound in place over the bruise. Then he stood off and surveyed the three discomfited victims and began to laugh, and presently as a sense of the ridiculousness of the whole affair took possession of them the rest joined until the cabin rang with their shouts.

"To think av ut, thot a quill-pig, the shtupidest baste thot pokes his nose in where he has no business, could have done all this in wan call!" gasped Pat. "'Tis mesilf thot takes me hat off to the nixt wan Oi mate. Oi wonder now where the little baste wint to. 'Tis a foine tale he is loike to be telling his friends this very minut."

Hal picked up one of the candles and began to search the cabin, looking under the bunks and in all the corners.

"You don't expect to find him inside after all that rumpus, do you, Hal?" laughed Plympton.

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"I'm not taking any chances," replied Hal. "I've had all I want of Prickly Porky for one night. Hello! What's that shining up there?" He pointed to a rafter in the darkest corner of the cabin.

"'Tis the eyes av something, and as shure as me name be Pat Oi belave 'tis the baste himsilf!" exclaimed the corporal reaching for another candle and holding it aloft. Sure enough, there sat the cause of the fright apparently not in the least concerned.

Spud reached for his rifle. "Here's where you pay for all this, you brute," he growled as he slipped in a cartridge. But before he could shoot Pat's big hand closed on the barrel of the rifle.

"Forget ut, me son!" he said. "'Twas not the fault av the baste. What did he do but walk in where he has been free to come as often as he plased? To his way av thinking 'tis oursilves be inthruding, and not he, and he's not far from roight at thot. 'Tis not yersilf would be taking the loife of a harmless crature for revinge, is ut?"

"Did you say harmless?" asked Walter.

Pat grinned. "Did he do ut?" he de-

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manded. "The ividence is thot ye did ut yersilf. Would ye put blame on the fire that burned the wan thot sat down in ut? We'll just chase the baste out, and Oi'm thinking ut is himsilf will be glad to take French leave do we but give him the chance. Give him a clear road and Oi'll be shtarting him along ut."

There was no need to make a second request for a clear way for the quill-pig, for the Lone Wolves had suddenly become possessed of a wholesome respect for the prickly little animal. They promptly stowed themselves in the bunks, while with a stick Pat prodded the protesting porcupine, who grunted and squeaked and clashed his big teeth. Finally he fell heavily to the floor and then with his quills all on end scuttled for the door and disappeared.

"Look out for loose quills on the floor thot yez don't get thim in the fate av yez," warned Pat, and the advice was timely, for a number of quills were found on the floor lying in wait for unwary bare feet.

The bunks were soon restored to order and once more the patrol turned in.

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"Say, Mr. Leader," called Spud with an audible chuckle, "of course this all goes down in the records."

"I think I'll revoke my order so far as this is concerned," replied Walter.

"You can't!" chortled Spud. "You made it irrevocable."

"Well, I said the haps, mishaps and events day by day, and this happened in the night, and that lets me out," retorted Upton.

"Not on your tintype!" was Spud's prompt reply. "A day consists of twenty-four hours, according to the dictionary, and you can't go back of that. Oh, this goes in the records all right, all right! I told you we'd get something on you!" Chuckling happily Spud rolled over and presently the cabin was silent save for the measured breathing of the sleepers.

The sun was streaming in at the door when they awoke, for they had made up for their broken rest, that is all but Pat, who from force of habit was up with the sun. He had the cereal cooked and the bacon and potatoes, the latter having been put to soak the night before, ready for the frying-pan when the others appeared, not so badly off for their ex-

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perience of the night as might have been expected. Walter's hand was, of course, very sore, but Hal asserted that he felt as good as ever so long as he didn't have to sit down, and Spud was as cheerful as if bumped heads and sore feet were the regulation thing. There was a good sized lump on his forehead, but it showed no further discoloration, whether or not due to the rabbit poultice no one could say.

In the bright morning light the Hollow appeared less gloomy, though no less wild. In fact, it seemed an ideal place for a week's camp, and every one was in high spirits. It was decided that the day should be spent in making the camp as comfortable as possible. Pat volunteered to patch the roof of the cabin with big sheets of birch bark and to cut a supply of logs and fire-wood if the others would help bring it in. This was agreed to and he at once started for a grove of big birches not far distant, Plympton going with him as assistant. The others busied themselves in further cleaning the inside of the cabin, clearing away the litter around the outside, cleaning out the spring which had

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been found a few feet to one side, making a substantial camp range with pot-hooks of varying lengths, and doing other odd jobs that would add to the comfort of all. One of the first things done was to float the patrol banner from a pole nailed to the cabin roof.

Pat had no difficulty in finding trees to suit him. Selecting a giant paper-birch with smooth, flawless trunk he made a cut through the bark to the sap wood for about a third of the way around the trunk near the base. Then reaching as far up as he could he made a parallel cut. He then connected these cuts at the ends by vertical cuts, afterward making another vertical cut from the middle of the upper cross cut to the middle of the lower. Making a "spud" or barking tool by the simple process of whittling the end of a small sapling to a wedge he loosened one edge of the bark and then by means of the "spud" gently worked the entire piece loose without breaking it. This gave him a strip of bark six feet long by a foot wide. In the same way he stripped off the second panel. Then he moved on to another tree.

Plympton had watched with interest and

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in silence until Pat moved along. Then he was moved to ask a question. "I have read how this thing is done," said he, "but I understood that the usual way is to circle the tree all the way around top and bottom and then make one cut between the two and strip off the bark in one big sheet. Why don't you do it that way? You would get more bark without spoiling so many trees."

Pat looked up at the towering birch. There was a softness in the blue eyes such as Plympton had never noticed before. "Ut is a gr-rand tree, is ut not?" he asked.

The younger boy nodded.

"And 'twould be a pity to kill ut, do ye not think?"

Again Plympton nodded.

"Well, there ye have the rason," said Pat. "If Oi complately girdled it the tree would die. The sap could not run. But by taking the bark from but a third av the way round Oi have not harmed ut save to shpoil the good looks av ut, and not even the nade av the bark would have timpted me to do thot were the tree where any but a few hunters would see ut. Oi be thinking ut be as sinful and unbe-

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coming the honor av a true shportsman to kill a gr-rand tree without nade as to waste the loife av another av God's cratures."

"You're right!" exclaimed Plympton heartily. "I never had thought of it in just that way, but it's true. And I hate to see these great ugly yellow scars. Don't you think we can get along without any more, Pat?"

"Wan more tree will do ut," replied the young woodsman, "and there's wan over beyant thot will be hidden by thot young hemlock."

When they reached the cabin they found that Spud was awaiting them with some impatience. During their absence he had made the frame for a table. He had driven two stout forked sticks into the ground about three feet apart and so that the forks were three feet from the ground. Parallel to these and six feet distant he had driven similar sticks and then connected the two pairs by laying straight, smooth stout saplings in the forks. Now he wanted but a covering to make his table complete, primitive but serviceable and convenient. The bark was just what he

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needed, and he howled long and loud when Pat would not let him have it until the repairs on the cabin roof were completed. These were done by laying the strips of bark overlapping, alternately convex and concave side up, and then putting logs on them to hold them in place. To Spud's disgust Pat used all the bark he had brought, but his spirits were restored on Pat's promise to get enough more for his purpose. This did not take long, and when it was tacked in place with brads which Spud produced from his ditty-bag the table was pronounced a great success.

The afternoon was spent by all hands in cutting and hauling in fire-wood. Walter's sore hand prevented him doing what he considered his share, but the others insisted that as leader he was not supposed to do the heavy work, and he finally desisted and devoted his time to laying out plans for the remainder of their stay in Smugglers' Hollow and the search for Lost Trail which would really begin there.

It was agreed that one of the first things to be done was to lay in a supply of meat. To Spud's huge delight he was detailed to go out with Pat the next morning in quest of a deer.

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If they failed to get one Hal was to have the next chance, and then Plympton.

"I'm sorry for you fellows, truly I am, because I'm going to get that buck to-morrow," chortled Spud as they turned in early that the hunters might have a good night's rest and be ready to start at daylight.

"Going to wear your new shoes?" asked Plympton innocently, and Spud relapsed into silence.

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CHAPTER X

SPUD GETS HIS BUCK

It seemed to Spud that he had hardly closed his eyes when he was awakened by a vigorous shake and opened them to find Pat, fully dressed, leaning over him. It was still dark, but in the east a faint glow gave warning that the break of day was close at hand. A quick but hearty breakfast of bacon, fried potatoes and cocoa was eaten and with a few crackers and raisins in their pockets, for Pat proposed to make a day of it if luck failed them in the morning, they were ready to start. As a matter of course Spud got his rifle, but Pat bade him leave it for one of the others to use if they desired, pointing out that it would be a useless incumbrance.

"But I might pick up a grouse or two," protested Spud.

"And scare ivery deer within a mile," retorted Pat with withering sarcasm. "Whin

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ut be deer ye be hunting 'tis deer ye hunt, and 'tis not the loikes av thot pop-gun thot will be bringing wan home."

So, empty handed, Spud fell in behind Pat, and if something of the keen edge of the anticipations of the night before had been lost who can blame him? With one gun for two men, and that in the other fellow's hands, half the pleasure of the hunt is lost. At least that is the way Spud felt. Had not Pat said that there was a buck awaiting him in Smugglers' Hollow? And did not that imply that he was to have a chance to do the shooting? Yet here he was empty-handed. Suppose they should jump a buck. Pat would get it, and as one would give them all the meat needed there would be no more hunting for big game. But if Spud was chagrined and a little bitter at heart he made no sign and Pat little guessed the disappointment that was masked by the cheerful grin of the sunshine-maker.

Pat had hunted that country before, and knowledge of the country is one of the first essentials in successful hunting, particularly when in quest of big game. It saves time

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and useless effort and at the same time increases the chances of success by making it possible to anticipate with some degree of certainty the probable course the game will take. So where Spud, had he been left to himself, would have tramped the woods aimlessly on the chance of jumping a deer, Pat now led straight for a certain hardwood ridge to the north and about three-quarters of a mile from camp.

"'Tis working up from the lowlands the bastes will be, and 'tis ourselves must be there to give them a proper reciption," he explained. They crossed the brook just below the camp and then went directly up the ridge. From time to time Pat carefully tested the light air by wetting a finger and holding it aloft. It was blowing straight in their faces as they stood on the ridge looking down into the valley, which was much to Pat's liking, for it meant that there was no danger of being winded by any deer that might be below them.

He now began to work along the ridge slowly and carefully, putting each foot down as if walking on eggs, yet seemingly without

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effort. There was no sound, for the leaves under foot were wet and sodden with the heavy night dew, and he avoided as by instinct the sticks which would break and snap under his weight. Not so Spud. Telling about it afterward he said, "I tried my darndest to avoid sticks, but the more I tried the less luck I had, it seemed to me, and each one snapped louder than the others. Pat would step on a stick and never make a sound, but when I stepped on the same one I'm hanged if the thing wouldn't crack like a pistol shot; and yet I don't weigh as much as Pat. It sure got my goat for a little while."

This was because Spud had not learned the art of still walking in the woods, for it is an art, and nothing less. His very anxiety, resulting in continuous conscious effort, tended to defeat his purpose. The elaborate effort to set each foot down carefully resulted in resting the entire weight of the body solidly on each foot alternately; whereas with Pat, moving with an easy, light, springy step, the weight was so distributed that it was carried through the entire step, never resting solidly on a given point. Then again long practice

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had made it second nature for Pat to feel out the ground with his moccasined feet and to instinctively know when a stick would bear his weight and when it would not. So, while his whole mind was concentrated on the finding of his game and every sense was on the alert, he moved forward confidently and silently until it seemed to the despairing Spud that those feet ahead of him were quite independent and did their own thinking. As for Spud's own feet, they were perverse. If there was a rotten stick within possible reach of them they found it and it snapped with a report sure to bring Pat's head around with a warning frown. It was getting on his nerves.

Finally they reached a point midway between two runs or paths made by deer following the same course day by day in going to and from their feeding grounds or drinking places.

"Sit down on thot log and kape the two eyes av ye peeled both ways," ordered Pat, putting the rifle in Spud's hands. "Oi be going to bate the thicket below, and if Misther Peaked-toes is there, as Oi suspect he be, he will loikely come out av the run we have just

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passed or else av the other wan which is a matter av two hundred and fifty yards farther along the ridge, just this side av the big yeller birch beyant. Shtay where ye be, for the chances are thot 'tis the nearest run he will be taking, but kape the eyes av ye on the watch ivery minut and if ye see the brush moving down below in the direction av the other run sneak along the ridge to within a hundred yards. Ye will have to judge the distance and set the soights accordingly. But whativer ye do, don't shoot until ye know what ye be shooting at! 'Tis the fool who shoots at moving brush thot kills men, and Oi have no desire thot ye be trying the thrick on me. Just remimber that Oi be somewhere below ye and be shure ye be holding on Misther Buck before ye pull the thrigger. Hold low and just back av the shoulder and forgit thot it be a deer at all, at all. Just think ye be on the rifle range at Woodcraft and make a bull's-eye.

"If a deer be badly froightened he will came on the jump and most loike ye will hear him coming. But if he do but just get the wind av me and is only suspicious he will try

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to shtale away and most loike ye will see him before ye hear him. He will be watching down below and 'tis more than an even chance thot when he reaches the top av the ridge he will shtand a few minuts to look back. Take yer toime and make shure av him. If Oi shtart anything Oi will give the caw av a crow wance. A deer hunter, loike a good Scout, must always be prepared, and remimber thot ye be both this day."

Pat now took his back track and was soon lost to view. It was his intention to make a wide detour and work along the edge of the swamp at the foot of the ridge and then gradually up. He would then be to windward of any game which had already left the swamp. A deer catching his scent would at once work up the ridge with an excellent chance that Spud would get a shot. Left to himself, Spud sat with every nerve keyed up to the highest pitch. He was to have his chance after all. But now he was not so sure that he wanted it. What if he should miss? What if the deer should get past without him seeing it? Would he be able to gauge the distance? It was one thing to kill a deer in imagination and quite

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another thing altogether to be actually sitting in momentary expectation of having a deer appear. He nervously wondered if he was so sure of his skill with a rifle after all.

How still it was! There was not a sound to denote that there was any other living creature in all that wilderness. At first things at a distance had been indistinct in the gray of dawn, but now the light was creeping through the forest rapidly. Through a break in the trees he could see the top of the opposite ridge bathed in the clear yellow light of the rising sun. Presently a yellow bellied sapsucker beat his reveille on the hollow stub of a dead pine, and Spud realized how jumpy his nerves were, for at the abrupt breaking of the silence he had all but dropped the rifle. A jay screamed harshly. The forest was awakening. What had become of Pat? It seemed as if he had been gone hours. Would he find anything down there? Perhaps there were no deer on this ridge at all and he would have his long wait for nothing. Presently as he shifted the rifle to an easier position he realized that he had been holding himself so tense that his strained muscles were now all

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of a shake, and this would not do at all. Ah, what was that? The caw of a crow far down below! Was it the signal or had some fool crow chosen that particular place to salute the sun? He strained his ears for a repetition, but there was none, and he felt sure then that it was the signal.

Once more he resumed his rigid attitude, gripping the rifle as if he feared it was to be torn from his grasp. Anxiously and intently he scanned the brush below for some movement, his ears strained for the snap of a stick or some other telltale sound. The minutes wore on. The forest resumed its death-like stillness. Fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour! It must be that Pat was mistaken. Unconsciously Spud relaxed. If there was a deer below he would have shown himself before this. What could Pat be doing? He wished that he would hurry up so that they could try their luck somewhere else. It was disappointing after such a long wait not to even have a glimpse of game. Ha! What was that moving just this side of the nearest run? Once more he gripped the rifle tensely, his eyes glued on the spot where

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he thought he had detected a slight movement. Then a cock grouse stepped into view and stood motionless, looking down the slope.

With a sigh of disappointment Spud scowled at the handsome bird. Then slowly he lifted the rifle until it covered the unsuspecting cause of his rudely dashed hopes. "I've a great mind to blow you to kingdom-come," he growled, "just for not being a deer."

He was still watching the grouse when a faint distant snap back of him caused him to turn quickly. There on top of the ridge a hundred yards distant stood a handsome buck. He had been watching his back trail, but at Spud's first move he had wheeled and now stood looking straight at him, head up, nostrils distended, eyes wide with startled wonder. For perhaps ten seconds hunter and hunted stared at each other, Spud too surprised to remember the rifle in his hands, the buck curious and uncertain. Then with a sharp whistle and a magnificent leap over a fallen tree the beautiful animal was gone.

Too late Spud came out of his trance. He threw forward the rifle, but one glimpse of a white tail was all that he was afforded, and

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sadly he realized that he had had his chance and missed it. He had been tried and found wanting. Big as he was tears of disappointment and mortification were very near the surface. What would Pat think of him? What should he tell the other fellows when he got back to camp? "They won't do a thing to me now after all my bragging," he muttered. "Serves me right. It wouldn't be so bad if we didn't need the meat. What an ass I was to sit there watching that fool grouse! Confound him, I wish I had blown his head off! No, I don't either. That wouldn't have gotten me the deer."

His thoughts were still running in a bitter vein when Pat appeared. "What's the matter with the sunshine-maker?" he demanded as he viewed Spud's gloomy face. "Ye must not let a little thing loike disappointment over not getting a shot ate the heart out av ye. Oi shtarted a big buck down on the edge av the swamp, but the foxy chap must have taken another run."

"But he didn't," growled Spud miserably. "He came right out and stood on top of the ridge, as pretty a shot as you ever saw, and

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I never saw him until he was there, and then I was so surprised that I forgot to shoot until it was too late." Spud blurted the confession out hurriedly.

Pat's eyes twinkled. Instead of the anger and the reproaches which Spud had prepared himself for there was only a hearty laugh. "Don't take ut to heart, me bye. Ye be not the first wan Oi have known to be so interested in admiring his first deer thot he misremimbered the gun in his hands. There's no harm done, not even to the buck, and he is not the only wan in the woods. Oi think we will move on a bit before ut gets too dry. Forget ut now, and ye will shoot all the straighter for ut the next toime." The young woodsman gave Spud a hearty slap on the back as he spoke, and at once led the way along the ridge.

That was a disappointing day to Spud. He realized for the first time that hunting may become real work. To be sure, it was relieved for a long time by the excitement of constant anticipation, but by noon this had given way to discouragement and he realized that the strain of constant effort to move noise-

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lessly had tired him more than an ordinary hike of twice the distance would have. As they sat on a log for a noon rest and munched their crackers and raisins Spud frankly confessed that he was ready to give it up and go back to camp. The bitterness of his lost chance still rankled deeply and to add to this there had been one other incident which had added to his sense of humiliation. While crossing a burnt-over tract they had jumped another deer. Spud had thrown forward his rifle at the first jump, only to find that he was shaking as with the ague and the sights rested anywhere but on that bounding gray form. Nevertheless he would have fired but for Pat's sharp command, "Don't shoot!" Then, and not till then, he saw that it was a doe. He had been too excited to note the sex at all.

Pat had said nothing at the time, but now as they stretched out in the sun he referred to the incident. "'Twas a narrow escape Mrs. Lightfoot was afther having a whoile back," he remarked by way of an opening, a twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Narrow escape nothing!" grunted Spud.

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"Why, I couldn't have hit the broad side of a barn, let alone that jumping-jack! The sight on the end of the rifle was doing a regular Irish jig. Pat, what's the matter with me? I never made such an ass of myself before. Why, I've scored over ninety out of a possible hundred more than once on the range in competition and with a whole crowd looking on. I—I guess I'm not well or—or something is the matter."

Pat laughed long and heartily. "'Tis buck fever thot ails ye, me bye, and nothing else. 'Tis buck fever, nothing else. 'Tis a complaint most hunters are loikely to have wid their first big game. Oi have seen a man shoot six fate over a shtanding buck at thirty yards and then pump his magazine empty without putting a bullet within ten feet av the baste. 'Tis wan thing to shoot at a mark and another thing to point yer gun at a living crature and ut ready to spring at the first sign av danger, or to be already on the jump. Oi've had ut mesilf. 'Twas the first toime I ever met a bear, and Oi reckon the spalpeen be laughing yet whiniver he do be thinking av the bye thot tore all the bark from the side

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av an innocent tree five fate to wan side av him and three feet above him. A quare disease ut is, but nine men in ivery ten have ut the first toime they try to hold a gun on a deer. Some never get over ut, but most av them do, and ye will be wan av them. When ye have killed a fat buck ye will forget ye ever had the chills and by the same token ye never will have them again."

"I guess it's a kind of stage fright," said the somewhat comforted Spud.

"Oi don't know what thot may be, but Oi guess ut is," replied Pat drily.

"You take the rifle this afternoon, Pat. It's our only chance to get meat to-day, and you know the fellows are counting on a venison steak," said Spud.

"Not a bit will Oi," retorted Pat. "'Twas a buck Oi promised ye, and 'twas yerself thot promised to get ut did Oi lade ye to ut, and the day is young yet. We'll be taking ut aisy here for an hour or two yet. 'Tis what the bastes thimselves be doing. They be lying down on the high land, but about four o'clock they will be moving again, working down into the hollows and toward the swamps. When

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they do ut is the sunshine-maker and crack shot av the Lone Wolves will be waiting for thim."

Despite Pat's optimism it seemed as if Spud was not to be granted another chance. They crossed the brook and skirted the edge of the swamp on the other side, Pat believing that because of the direction of the wind and because the deer would be working down instead of up, their chances of a successful shot would be better than if they worked back over the ground they had covered in the morning. Tracks they saw in plenty, but that was all. The long shadows of late afternoon were beginning to creep into the valley when they reached a point half a mile from camp and sat down on the edge of the swamp to rest. Spud had given up all hope and sat in despondent silence. He had so wanted to get a deer, and he knew that this day was his only opportunity. He moodily watched an eagle winging its way toward a mountain at the head of the valley and lived over again his fiasco of the early morning. Suddenly Pat nudged him.

"Oi have a notion to see if ye can hold

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steady on a fixed mark," said he in the low tone he had used all day during the hunt. "Do ye see thot little patch av gray in the opening between the two birches to the right av that windfall a hundred yards up the ridge? Let me see ye put a ball in the middle av ut."

Spud looked as directed and saw the little patch of gray. It looked much like a bit of weather-worn bark. He was glad of anything to break his gloomy thoughts, and moreover, here was a chance to show Pat that he really could shoot. Lifting the rifle he sighted carefully and noted with inward satisfaction that there was not a tremor in his hands. At the report there was a sudden and startling commotion behind the screen of the windfall, a sound as of some heavy animal leaping away, a crash and then silence.

Spud turned and looked stupidly at Pat, but the latter was already on his feet and starting for the windfall. "Come on, bye! Ye got him, and 'tis hard hit he is, but be ready to give him another shot if nade be!" he shouted.

Mechanically Spud threw another cartridge

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into place and followed Pat, still in a daze. "What is it, Pat? I don't understand. Did I hit something back of that windfall?" he panted as he plunged after the young woodsman.

It took but a few minutes to reach the windfall and round the upper end of it. Pat was first, and his whoop of delight told Spud that the prize, whatever it was, would need no second shot. Panting with excitement he burst through the brush and then stopped with a gasp of sheer astonishment and incredulity. Pat was stooping over a fat buck. The animal was quite dead, and Pat had already drawn his knife to bleed it.

"'Twas a foine shot, me son! Oi could not have made a better mesilf, and 'tis proud Oi am to be guiding for the loikes av ye. Mate in plenty we will be afther having. What ails ye, man?" Pat appeared to notice for the first time the dazed expression of his companion.

"Pat," said Spud solemnly, "come over here and kick me till I wake up. I didn't shoot that deer. I didn't see it at all."

"Then may old Satan become a saint!"

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exclaimed the other laughing heartily. "Ye not only shot ut, but ye saw ut before ye shot. Did ye not shoot at a little patch av gray?"

"Yes, but—but—did you know that that was a deer all the time?" A sudden suspicion took possession of Spud.

Again Pat's hearty laugh rolled out. Then he told Spud how he had seen the buck come over the ridge and leisurely work down to the windfall. There he had stood. Pat, fearing that if he should tell Spud what he was shooting at the latter would have a return of the buck fever, had resorted to the simple plan which had worked out so well. From the position of the animal he knew that if Spud hit at all the shot was likely to prove fatal, as had been the case. The ball had passed through just back of the left shoulder and quartering had reached the heart.

"Now," he concluded, "ye have yer buck, and 'tis the last av the fever thot ye will be having, Oi do be thinking," and Spud felt in his heart that it was so.

It was a fine six point buck, and Spud mourned that he could not take out the head to have mounted as a trophy. But this was

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impossible, though Pat promised that he should have the horns. The animal was soon bled and drawn and then with the four feet lashed together he was slung from a stout sapling and suspended between them, and they began their triumphant march to camp.

Needless to say they received a royal reception. The deer was skinned, and soon a savory steak was broiling over the coals. After dinner when all hands were gathered around the camp-fire the story of the hunt was demanded. Spud had been dreading this, for though he had got his buck he was not at all proud of his day's record. It was Pat who told the story and he lauded the Lone Wolf cook and sunshine-maker to the skies. There was not a hint about the big buck of the early morning nor of the jumping of the doe and the attack of buck fever, and Spud blushed as Pat described as only he could the successful shot, giving all the credit to the young hunter. When he had finished there were congratulations all over again until Spud's ears burned and he could stand it no longer. Jumping to his feet, he demanded that he be heard.

"Half a story is no story at all; Pat has

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told but half, and the other half is different," he cried. Then in his own inimitable way he told the story over again, and his comrades roared with laughter as he described his feelings when he discovered the big buck and again when he illustrated the shakes of buck fever. Spud was a good story teller, and now he spared himself not at all.

"Never mind, Spud old man, you got the buck," cried Hal, wiping the tears from his eyes, "and I doubt if I could have done that."

"And think of the feasts we will have!" cried Plympton. "I propose three cheers for Spud Ely the only, original cook, sunshine-maker, story teller and mighty hunter of the Lone Wolves!"

The cheers were given with a will, and to have heard them you never would have guessed that they hid more than one pang of disappointment, for all chances for another hunt were ended by the success of the first one.

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CHAPTER XI

PLYMPTON'S VISITORS

It was Plympton's turn to guard camp. As Upton had said, it ought not to have been necessary to post a guard. In fact, as a rule such a thing is almost unheard of in the great woods. Supplies must be protected from predatory animals, but otherwise a camp may be left open and unguarded for days at a time. However, the experience at Little Goose Pond had proved that there are exceptions to this rule and had left a feeling of uncertainty in the minds of the boys. Although Pat was quite sure that the thief had been passing through and had gone on about his business and that they would have no more trouble from him Upton deemed it best that the camp should at no time be left wholly alone, and had announced that each day he would appoint a guard.

Walter and Hal had gone east to explore

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the upper end of the Hollow. Pat and Spud had started to try to locate a trail which Pat had been told entered from the northwest. Plympton policed the camp and put it in order and had then brought out his note-book, maps and sketch-book, intending to complete his records up to date and make a rough sketch of the Hollow as it appeared from the cabin, and also a sketch of the cabin itself. He possessed a considerable degree of skill with pencil and brush and the romantic history of the old cabin and its picturesque appearance in its wilderness setting had made strong appeal to the artist within and he welcomed the opportunity to sketch it undisturbed.

Mindful of his duty as guard he chose a spot which, though some distance from the cabin, commanded a full view of the doorway and at the same time would give him the desired composition for his sketch. An old stump furnished him a seat and he was soon busy with pencil and paper. A pair of whiskey-jacks, the ever present Canada jays, had taken possession of the camp as is their way, and were making themselves very much at

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home investigating everything about the camp, and even venturing inside the doorway. A mink appeared from the direction of the spring. He paused for an instant, sniffed suspiciously in the direction of the cabin and then vanished as only a mink can. It was as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. A minute later he reappeared, running with nose to the ground and quartering like a hound. He had caught the fresh scent of a rabbit and was trying to unravel bunny's trail. Later a porcupine shuffled into view, paused as if minded to explore the inside of the cabin, apparently thought better of it and went on about his business. Plympton wondered if it was the one that had routed the camp that first night, and chuckled at the memory. A red squirrel dropped on the roof and scolded the jays.

In watching these fascinating wild life scenes Plympton quite forgot for a time his real purpose. When he did get down to work he became so absorbed in it that he quite forgot everything else. How long he had been at work he did not know but it had been some time when he became aware that Chatterer,

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the red squirrel, was making an unusual fuss even for him. It was evident that he was excited, very much excited, and that something met with his disapproval. Idly wondering what it was Plympton looked up to locate him. He was still on the cabin roof, and his tail was jerking as if actuated by nothing less than an electric dynamo. His voice had a sharper pitch than usual, and it was very plain that he was hurling invectives of the most biting kind known to squirrel language. Yes, Chatterer was excited, too excited to sit still, for he would run along the roof a few steps, then back as if quite beside himself. But all the time he kept his eyes fixed in one direction, to the left and slightly to the rear of the cabin, where the thick undergrowth met the tiny clearing.

Wonderingly the young artist looked in the same direction. For a moment he did not fully take in what he saw. His first impression was that it was a man who had just stepped out of the thicket, and a fleeting thought of the thief crossed his mind. Then with a sudden sinking feeling inside he realized that it was no man, but a bear! No

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wonder that Chatterer was excited. Plympton felt no less so himself. In fact, he rather envied the squirrel his place of vantage on the cabin roof. It is all very well to read and to be told that the black bear is one of the most timid animals in the woods unless cornered, and that man has nothing to fear from him, but in the face of an unexpected meeting with him on his native soil one may be pardoned if suddenly assailed by a flood of doubts.

It was so with Plympton now. All the stories he had ever read about the timidity of bruin amounted to nothing in the face of the solid fact that there stood a huge beast big enough and strong enough to crush the life out of him, and here was he unarmed and helpless, for Pat's rifle was in the cabin. Never in his life before had he felt so small and insignificant. "Scared?" said he telling about it afterward. "Why, I could feel my hair rise right up, and I had that all-gone feeling inside as if my stomach and everything else had dropped out. I knew that according to theory the big brute would take to his heels at the first move I made, but some-

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how I hated to try the theory. It didn't look so plausible then as when I had read of it, and so I just sat still. Fact is I was too scared to move anyhow.

"For two or three minutes after I first saw him—it seemed hours to me—he sat on his haunches studying the cabin and sniffing. The wind was from him to me so that he didn't smell me, and as I was sitting perfectly still and was partly hidden anyway, of course he didn't see me. I guess he smelled the bacon we had had for breakfast, for presently he dropped down on all fours and shuffled over to the fireplace and began to paw over the ashes. When he lifted his head one of the pot-hooks scraped his nose and he gave it a biff that sent the lug-pole and all the pot-hooks flying. Then he found the hole where we had thrown the bacon rind and other refuse from the table and for about five minutes he was a happy bear to judge by his grunts as he cleaned that hole out.

"After that he wandered about uneasily. He kept looking over to the cabin and I knew well enough that he smelled the venison hanging there, but he was suspicious. I sup-

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pose there was just enough man-smell to make him cautious, and he couldn't quite get his nerve up to the point of making a closer investigation. Two or three times he sat up and studied the cabin, wrinkling his nose, sniffing and drawing his lips back so that I could see his teeth. Then he went back to the fireplace, and after pawing around there some more went over to the table. I guess there may have been some crumbs on that, though I thought the whiskey-jacks had picked up all those. Anyhow he reared up and put his fore paws on the table and of course one of the strips of bark gave way and let one paw through. That made him mad again. He was sure short on temper, that bear, and it took him about two seconds to finish that table, all but the four posts.

"I guess that by that time he had made up his mind that there was no one at home, for he started toward the cabin as if he intended to find out what was there. He was about half-way there and I was trying to get my nerve up to yell at him, for I knew what would happen to our supplies if he once got at 'em, when all of a sudden he stopped short, pricked

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up his ears, looked up the trail by which we had come in, sniffed a couple of times, then with a growl whirled about and dusted for the woods as if the old nick were after him.

"Say, maybe I wasn't glad! I sat right where I was until I was sure he was really gone, and then I hiked up to the cabin and grabbed the rifle. You bet I was going to be ready for him if he showed up again! But what had frightened him was what stuck me. I guess it was all of ten minutes later that I heard a noise up the trail and looked up to see a man approaching. I didn't have to look twice to know that he was a woodsman born. He was dressed like a lumberman, wore shoepacks, and carried a rifle. He had a pack made up of his blanket strapped on his back, and I suppose that whatever else he carried was inside of that. He had a close cropped beard, brown, heavily streaked with gray, bushy gray eyebrows and blue-gray eyes that seemed to look right through you, and yet for all their keenness were mighty pleasant. He was about six feet tall, and when he took his hat off a long scar showed beginning at the edge of the hair and running straight back."

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"Bill Marshman, game warden and deputy sheriff!" interrupted Pat. "What now moight he be doing way off up here, I wonder?"

Plympton nodded. "You're a good guesser, Pat. That's who it was, though of course I didn't know it at first, and wondered what in the deuce he was driving at by the questions he fired at me. Wanted to know how many of us were in the party, how long we had been here, if we had seen anybody else or heard any guns, where we had come from, where we were going, whom we had for guide, and a lot more. When I told him that we were from Woodcraft Camp and that Pat was our guide he seemed satisfied. Said he had guessed as much when he saw the Lone Wolf banner on the flagpole and as long as we were Boy Scouts, and from what he knew of them Scouts were to be trusted, he would tell me who he was and what he was after.

"Then he told me his name and said that he had received word that an outlaw wanted for murder in Canada had crossed the line and was supposed to be somewhere in this section. Seems he had been in some kind of

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a fracas in a lumber camp in which a man had been knifed, and he was wanted for the killing. Being a lumber-jack it was supposed that he would make for one of the lumber camps on this side and he, the sheriff, was making a round of them. He had been at the Gillicuddy camp when he happened to think of Smugglers' Hollow and what a bully place it would be for a fellow to hide out, so he decided to have a look here. He didn't have much of a description of the man wanted. He is supposed to be of Scotch descent, about five feet eight in height, and the little finger on his left hand is missing. He dusted out in a hurry, taking mighty little with him but his rifle and blanket, but he is a good woodsman and is said to know the country thoroughly on both sides of the line, and the sheriff figures that he can hide out for some time living off the country. That's why he decided to have a look-in here.

"While he was talking I thought of the thief that swiped our stuff at Little Goose Pond and told him about it. He was interested right away. Said he didn't know of any one around this part of the country who

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would swipe supplies like that unless he was mighty hard up. If they really wanted 'em they would just walk into camp and ask for 'em. It looked to him as if it was more than likely that the fellow he was after was the one who visited us, for if he was short of supplies as reported he must be hungry for something besides fresh meat by this time. I told him how Pat had found the cracker crumbs on the trail out from Little Goose and he was inclined to think as Pat does that the fellow has left these diggings, probably striking for the camps to the west.

"We broiled a venison steak for lunch, and then he said that he must be hitting the trail. Said he was going to have a look at a couple of hunters' camps to the north, and then would probably swing around to the lumber camps to the west. Put me on my honor as a Scout that none of us would say anything about him or the man he is looking for to any visitors we may have. I told him about the bear, and he laughed fit to kill himself. Said all I needed to have done was to have hollered once and Mr. Bear would have dusted out just as he did when he detected him com-

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ing down the trail. What gets me is how that bear heard him or smelled him or found out some other way that he was coming so long before he showed up."

"Did he say how old a chap the outlaw is?" demanded Spud.

"Yes; just a young fellow, not much over twenty," replied Plympton.

"And did you tell him about finding the footprint at the spring on the Smugglers' Hollow trail?" pursued Spud eagerly.

"No," confessed Plympton, "I forgot all about that."

"Anyhow, I bet it's the same fellow," declared Spud. "Say, fellows, wouldn't it have been great if we could have captured a regular outlaw? Perhaps we may yet. He may be hanging around here yet for all we know. Gee, but it would be a feather in our caps! Think how the papers would play it up.

"BOY SCOUTS CAPTURE BLOODY OUTLAW

"*Run him down in his stronghold in the wilderness and deliver him over to justice.*"

A general laugh followed Spud's theatrical

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delivery of this dime novel thriller, and then all hands went out to inspect the damage done by the bear and repair it so far as possible. The table was a hopeless wreck, and as it was too late to get more bark that night there was nothing for it but leave this for the next day.

"He was a big wan," commented Pat as he studied bruin's tracks. "'Tis a pity ye did not have the gun handy. A foine mat for yer room the skin av the auld black rascal would have made."

"Don't you suppose he'll come back?" asked Spud eagerly.

"Not in a month av blue moons," replied Pat. "A bear the size av thot wan has lived long enough to be wise to the ways av men, and now thot he has found out thot the camp be inhabited 'tis not the loikes av him thot will be poking his nose into throuble. Did Big Bill say anything about the trails out av the Hollow?"

"Yes," replied Plympton. "He said that the one you and Spud started out to look for is an old trapper's trail over to some ponds northwest of here."

"Oi thought as much," said Pat. "We

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found ut, and by the signs Oi made up me mind thot it was av no importance."

"He also said that there is a trail from the upper end of the Hollow over to Big Bear Pond about five miles due east, but it is hard to get to because of a big beaver pond that fills almost the whole of the upper end of the Hollow, the outlet of which is the stream down below us here. A trail from Big Bear Pond leads over to a little village I forget the name of about ten miles farther east, and from there there is a trail over the line into Canada. He thinks it probable that that is the way the fellow he is after came in. The trail he took himself is out of the lower end of the Hollow and swings north for a short distance, ending at the hunter's camps he wanted to have a look at. One of them is only a couple of miles or so from here."

Pat nodded. "Oi know ut," said he. "'Tis the wan we would have gone to if we had found any wan here."

"The other is about six miles beyond," continued Plympton. "These are the only trails he knows of, and he seems to be pretty familiar with this part of the country."

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Again Pat nodded. "No wan knows ut better," he commented.

"I told him about Lost Trail," Plympton went on, "and he said that he had heard the story, but took little stock in it. When I pointed out the known fact that smugglers did make use of this hollow and that they must have had some way of getting here from Canada he said he thought it more than probable that the beaver pond didn't exist in those days and that they came in by way of Big Bear Pond. Their object was a safe hiding place for their stuff, and not a short cut into the States, as was the case with the raiding parties of the early days. If there ever was such a trail, and he doubts it, it has been lost so long that it probably never will be found again, in his opinion. He advises us to stay here as long as we can and make the most of the hunting, which he says is good, and then work around the south side of the beaver pond and take the Big Bear trail if we are really bound to take that message through into Canada. He doesn't approve of us trying to make a bee line north without a trail because of some bad country."

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This was not altogether cheering news, and that evening as they sat around the fire they discussed the matter thoroughly. It seemed very clear that none of the known trails could be the one they were looking for. The Big Bear trail was altogether too far to the east. No war party making a hurried raid would ever have swung way over to Smugglers' Hollow, miles out of their way, in order to strike the American settlements.

"I tell you what it is," said Upton emphatically, "there's a break somewhere in that range to the north or else they came straight over the mountains. It's up to us to find a break on the north side of the Hollow. If we can't we'll cross the range and make our own trail as straight north as we can. Going out by way of Big Bear trail would be no real Scout work at all. It doesn't look as if we had much of a chance to find the old trail, but we can show what kind of woodsmen we are, and I think that is what Dr. Merriam expects of us. I'm for pushing straight north when we are convinced that we can't find the old trail, but I'm not giving up hope of that yet. What do you fellows say?"

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"That we're right with you, old Scout!" replied Hal promptly. "Traveling a well known trail like the Big Bear trail wouldn't be any fun at all."

To this the others agreed.

"All right, that's settled," replied Upton. "What shall we do to-morrow?"

"I'd like to have a look at that beaver pond," said Spud. "I've never seen a live beaver, and I'd like to see the dam and houses."

"Same here," replied Walter. "We saw the pond to-day from a distance. Pat knows all about beavers, so I'll appoint him guard for to-morrow, and the rest of us will go up to the pond unless some had rather do something else."

But this plan just suited the others, and so the matter was left.

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CHAPTER XII

BEAVERS AND THEIR WORKS

THE morning dawned dark and gloomy, with a decided threat of rain. However, as none of the boys minded a wetting, it was decided to carry out the program as planned, so shortly after breakfast the four started for the upper end of the Hollow, leaving Pat in charge of the camp. The pond was not difficult to find. They had only to follow up the brook which flowed down past the cabin, and this was made still easier by an old trail. A walk of about half a mile brought them to the dam. Rather, it brought them to the lower dam, for to their surprise they discovered another dam some distance above the first, and beyond that was a third. The result was a series of three ponds of which the lower one was the largest and was many acres in extent.

"Why!" exclaimed Spud, "it's a regular lake! I didn't suppose that we'd find anything like this. I thought we'd find a little

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pond, not much more than a mud hole. Why, this is as big as Little Goose Pond."

"Didn't I tell you that the sheriff said that the beavers had blocked off this end of the Hollow?" asked Plympton. "You didn't suppose a little mud pond would do that, did you?"

"I didn't think much about it," confessed Spud. "I just took it for granted that the Hollow was pretty narrow here and the beavers had set back enough water to spoil the trail and make it bad going, but I didn't dream of anything like this. Say, fellows, do you really believe they made all this pond? Don't you think that there was a pond here in the first place? Why, it would take an engineer to dam up a water supply like this."

"You've hit the nail on the head, Spud!" laughed Upton. "That's just what the beaver is—an engineer, and a mighty good one, if I know anything about it. Sure, they made this pond, the whole of it. Probably this was a nice flat bit of wild meadow when they came into the Hollow, with the brook flowing through it. They probably started with a little pond and made it bigger as needed. I

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wonder if they made this dam first or those upper ones. I suppose we can tell by examining them."

"What I don't see is why a little pond isn't as good as a big one," persisted Spud. "After they'd made a pond what did they make it bigger for? They must like to work better than I do. Say, it must have taken them a good long while to build this dam. Why, the whole thing must be five or six hundred feet long!"

"A poor guess for a hunter," Hal broke in. "I bet it's nearer a thousand than six hundred feet. What do you say, Walt?"

"Let's measure it, and then we'll know," replied Walter. "It's this guessing business that is at the bottom of a lot of foolish stories about things that people see, especially things in the woods. A bear looks about twice as big as he really is, eh, Sister?"

Plympton grinned. "He sure looks big enough when you haven't got a gun," he replied. "But I think you are right about this guessing business. Good Scouts don't guess; they find out. I think it will be bully to find out for ourselves all we can about this beaver

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colony, and the thing to begin on is the dam. Let's measure it and see how it was built, and try to find out how old it is. I haven't read much about beavers, and what I have read is awfully confusing. Some writers say one thing and some another until a fellow doesn't know what to believe. I know they are mighty interesting animals, and now we've got a chance to find out something about them for ourselves, or their works anyway, I say let's do it. Isn't there a Bible saying that runs something like 'by their works ye shall know them'? I guess that applies here, because I understand that beaver don't often show themselves in daytime, coming out at night mostly, so our chance of seeing them is small. But we can study their works, and that'll teach us a whole lot about the animals themselves."

"Sister's got the right idea," said Walter. "We can find out a lot if we are of a mind to, and incidentally answer some of Spud's questions. The idea that they don't come out except at night is not altogether correct, from what I have heard. They are night loving animals, all right, but in places where they

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are seldom molested they show themselves in daytime and even work. Seems as if this place was lonely enough for them to have no fear of interference from man, and it may be that if we hide and wait long enough one or two will show themselves. Perhaps there is none here now; like the mound builders, they may have vanished leaving their works only as testimony that they once lived. The poor creatures have been hunted mercilessly in the past, but now are protected by law. I suspect, however, that a lot are illegally trapped, and it may be that the colony here has been cleaned out. The spirit of outlawry seems to have made this Hollow a sort of headquarters from the beginning right up to date if Sheriff Bill's suspicions are true, and that skunk from across the line has been hiding out here. Anyway, it's for us to determine for ourselves whether or not there are any beaver here now."

"Of course they're here now! What would those houses be doing out there if they were not?" As he spoke Spud pointed to three rough dome-shaped mounds over toward the northern shore and some little distance above the dam. Two of these rose fully five feet

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above the water, while the third was rather flattened and even at that distance had a disreputable appearance.

"That doesn't signify anything except that beaver have been here," retorted Walter. "Looks to me as if one of those houses is all falling to pieces now, and the others have been built a long time, because there is grass growing on them. Perhaps they have been abandoned. We can't tell until we get a closer look. Sister, you and Hal measure the dam while Spud and I study it and see what we can find out about it."

Plympton at once produced a piece of fishline which he knew to be just four yards long, and with Hal began to measure the dam. Walter and Spud walked along the crest of it, studying the formation. It was agreed that each should keep his observations and deductions to himself until the dam had been thoroughly inspected, and then that all should compare notes and see what the net results might add to their knowledge of beaver and beaver ways. It began to rain just as the two young surveyors finished measuring the dam. In anticipation of this two ponchos had been brought

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along. These were at once staked out to make a shelter in the lee of a thick growth of hemlocks, a couple of logs were dragged under it for seats and a little screen of hemlock branches arranged between it and the water, but in such a way as not to interfere with the view of the beaver houses while shielding the boys from observation from the pond.

"Now let it rain," said Spud as they made themselves comfortable under the ponchos. "Fire away, Hal, and give us the length of the dam. I guess you were nearer right than I was. Come to walk along it, it is longer than I thought."

"It's exactly 823 feet long," replied Hal. "I didn't suppose they ever built 'em as long as that."

"More than twice as long," replied Walter. "There are dams which measure over 2,000 feet, though of course that is very exceptional."

"Phew! Is that so? I should think it would take the little beggars all their lives to do a job like that, and that there would have to be a lot of 'em at that."

Upton smiled. "You're not far wrong on

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that point, Spud," said he. "This dam isn't the work of one generation of beavers, but of several. How old do you think the oldest part of this dam is?"

"Oldest part? Isn't it all the same age? I don't see any difference. It all looks pretty old to me." Spud ran a quizzical eye along the dam.

"Poor scouting, Spud! Poor scouting! What's the matter with your eyesight? Why, even little me, only in my second year in the woods, can see that," laughed Plympton. "Look at the southern end, and then at the end nearest us. There isn't anything but grass and weeds growing on it over there, while there are bushes and young trees on it up here."

"That's so. I never thought about that." Spud studied the dam with new interest. "I suppose the oldest part is where the biggest trees are."

"Sure thing, and that's that section just to our left," replied Walter. "But you might have known that anyway."

"I don't see how," said Hal wrinkling his brows in a puzzled frown.

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"By the old bed of the brook," retorted Walter, "and the location of the houses. The first dam had to be across the brook, didn't it? And the houses would be built where the water backed up deep enough first. Well, there's the old bed of the brook, right where the biggest trees on the dam are. It must be that the brook originally came down well over on this side of the valley. You can see where the old bed turns down there toward the middle where the brook is now. The banks come down mighty steep on this side, while on the other side they slope down very gradually and I suspect that the middle of the valley was pretty near flat. Of course the water backed up faster on this side and gave 'em depth enough for their houses. It was just the right place for a dam, and the beavers knew it."

"Some engineers!" commented Spud admiringly. "How old do you suppose the original dam is?"

"Not less than thirty years, and probably nearer fifty, to judge by the size of that tamarack growing on it," replied Walter.

"Well, after they got their little old pond what did they want to make it bigger for? I

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don't suppose they made all the rest of that dam just for fun," persisted Spud, whose interest was now thoroughly aroused and who was athirst for information.

"Not so as you'd notice it," replied Walter. "That isn't the beaver's way. He isn't afraid of work, but he doesn't work for fun. He knows what he is doing and everything he does is with a purpose. I suppose that originally what is now the bottom of the pond was covered with trees, mostly food trees probably. As they used these up around the edge of the pond they had to go farther up on shore than they liked and so they just added to the length of the dam and perhaps added a little to the height so as to back up the water to or nearly to the trees they wanted to cut. You know it's a whole lot easier to float logs than to drag them. Later on another generation of beavers did the same thing, and so the dam grew longer and the pond bigger until it became as we see it now. Notice how the northern end is anchored against that big boulder. The stuff growing on that part is smaller than on the part across the old brook bed, so I guess it

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must have been added some years later. Probably the water ran around both ends when the dam was short. Then when they wanted more water they knew enough to carry this end clear to that boulder behind which the bank rises so sharply that they never would have to build farther in that direction."

"Say, those little chaps must be some diggers too, to get all this earth that's in the dam," Plympton broke in. "What gets me is how they brought it here. Is it true that they use their broad flat tails to carry mud on?"

Walter laughed heartily. "That's one of the old fables that used to pass for natural history, like the story that the porcupine could shoot his quills at his enemies. A beaver's tail is mighty useful in a lot of ways. He can turn it on edge and use it as a propeller when he wants to swim fast; it makes a support for him when he sits up to cut a tree; he uses it to signal with by slapping the water, and probably he has other uses for it. But it isn't a trowel as some old writers, with more imagination than powers of obser-

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vation, have stated. The beaver is a good digger all right, but don't for a minute think that he and his comrades brought all this earth here and then sodded it over. As a matter of fact they brought only a small part of it."

"Well, how did it get here, then?" asked Spud.

Walter parried this with a counter question. "Do you know how they start their dams?"

"Fell a few big trees across the brook where they want the dam and then fill in the chinks, I suppose. I've heard that they can cut a tree that's a good many inches through," replied Spud.

"The latter is true enough," replied Upton, "but your idea of the way they go to work to start a dam is all wrong, though I guess most people hold the same idea. I know I did until I got hold of a recent book on the subject and saw some photographs of a new dam. That would be mighty poor engineering from the beaver standpoint. He doesn't fell trees across the brook at all; not intentionally, anyway. He makes his dam of poles

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laid parallel with the stream and with the big ends pointing up-stream. The bushy tops are sometimes weighted with mud and stones when the poles are in a current. The poles are anywhere from four to ten or twelve feet long, so the dam has a broad base to start with. Short sticks and small brushy trees and branches are worked in with the poles, and so the thing is built up."

"But a thing like that wouldn't hold water!" protested Spud.

"Just you try filling up a brook with brush and see how quickly the water will set back!" retorted Walter. "Of course it works through, but it takes time, and meanwhile the water is coming down faster than it can get through the obstruction and has to set back. But the beavers do use mud and grass and stuff, filling in the face of the dam so as to further stop the flow of water, but they don't cover the dam all over with mud and earth as some people think, because there is no need. A solid dam isn't what they are after, to start with, and so long as the pond maintains the desired level they don't care if it does seep through. Of course the current brings down

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a lot of drift stuff, leaves and grass and twigs, and this gets washed in among the foundations and sticks there and rots away. A lot of sediment works its way in. In the fall leaves are blown into it and cling there until they rot. Sometimes the beavers deepen the pond along the face of the dam by digging, and they put the mud they take out on the dam. So in course of time the dam becomes almost solid. There is soil enough for grass roots to take hold and later even young trees sprout and grow there, like those alders yonder. The roots of all these help to still farther bind the whole mass until at last there you are." Walter waved his hand in the direction of the dam.

"Seems to me that I read somewhere that they dig canals too," said Plympton.

"Sure thing. I guess they're the original canal builders of the world," replied Walter. "They are just as good canal builders as dam builders, and that's going some."

"Canals!" exclaimed Spud. "What in the dickens do they want of canals?"

"Same thing that men want of them—easy transportation of freight. They run them up

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to groves standing back from the pond where the ground is level, or nearly so, and float their food logs down that way. They are usually filled by seepage, but sometimes they tap a spring and fill a canal from that."

"Speaking of food, what do they eat?" asked Plympton.

"Lily and other roots in summer, but their mainstay is bark, especially poplar or aspen. They also eat birch and alder bark. In the fall they harvest a big lot of young trees, cut 'em into short lengths and sink these with the larger branches in a big pile near the house where they can get at it under the ice. I wouldn't wonder if these fellows here were beginning their harvest."

"Tell us about the houses, Mr. Naturalist," begged Spud.

"You can see those for yourself," retorted Walter. "They make a big platform of sticks and mud until it comes a few inches above the level of the water. Then they raise a thick wall of sticks wattled together, and this is covered with mud, brush and trash. There is one room inside, having two or more entrances from passages under water at a suffi-

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cient depth to be sure that they will not freeze up in the coldest weather. The top of the roof is never closed wholly with mud as are the side walls, but opportunity is left for air to filter through. Old houses are usually repaired each fall by adding sticks where needed and by giving a new coating of mud."

"Hold on!" expostulated Hal. "Chief Scout Seton says that the beaver finishes the outside of his house with sticks, not mud."

"Probably the Chief Scout has made a more sweeping statement than he meant to. Just look at those houses over there and see for yourself. If the mud wasn't the last thing applied to those houses then something is wrong with my eyes. Another chap, one of the best writers on the beaver that I know of, tells about watching them replaster their houses in preparation for winter and shows photographs of houses on which you can see only the ends of a few sticks. I suppose that beavers, like most other animals, vary in habits according to environment and the houses the Chief Scout has examined happened to be without the mud covering."

At that moment Spud gave a warning hiss

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and nodded toward the houses. Near one of them was a little brown head, and behind it was a widening silver ripple. It was a beaver swimming.

"He's headed this way," whispered Spud. "Everybody hold his breath and don't move. Perhaps we shall have a chance to see him close."

Straight in swam the beaver, while the watchers did literally hold their breath. When within about twenty feet of the dam he swerved and swam parallel with the dam for a short distance and then abruptly dived.

"Do you suppose he saw us or smelled us?" whispered Spud in a disappointed tone.

Walter shook his head. "If he had been frightened he would have whacked the water with his tail as he went under and so warned his friends," he whispered. "Keep perfectly still and we may see him again."

Intently the four boys watched the water, but there was no sign of the beaver. Then Plympton out the tail of his eye caught a movement on the dam some thirty feet below where the beaver had disappeared. With a nod of his head he drew the attention of the

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others to this spot. There, climbing up, was the beaver. In the water he had appeared graceful. Out of the water he seemed quite the reverse. His short legs and thick body made him appear awkward and clumsy. But when he sat up, as he did presently after what appeared to be an inspection of a certain place in the dam, this awkwardness disappeared. Apparently satisfied that all was as it should be he presently began to eat the bark from a freshly cut poplar stick.

It was a picture to be remembered—the forest-encircled lake, its placid surface disturbed only by the spattering raindrops, the surrounding mountains with their tops buried in the low-hanging clouds, and there at his ease on the monumental work of his ancestors, surveying the scene with every appearance of contentment, the descendent of the original settlers of the wilderness.

Hal, shifting his position that he might the easier watch the dam builder, inadvertently snapped a twig under foot. It was a very tiny snap, and it did not seem possible that it could have carried to the unsuspecting beaver. But in an instant he had dived into the pond,

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his tail hitting the water with a slap that rang like a pistol shot. It was answered by two distant slaps from close to shore beyond the houses.

"Great Scott! Some hearing that fellow's got!" exclaimed Hal.

Walter stretched his cramped legs. "I guess that's all the beaver we'll see to-day," said he. "Looks to me as if this rain means to keep it up for the rest of the day and I guess the best thing we can do is to hike back to camp."

"And not have a look at those other dams, nor look for their canals or the place where they are cutting?" protested Spud. "I'm getting too all-fired interested to quit now."

"All right, Spud. You can stay if you want to. I'm going back to camp," said Walter. "I guess you can't get lost up here, and if you want to stay and study beavers in the wet I've no objections. How about you other fellows?"

Hal and Plympton elected to return to camp, but Spud insisted that he was going as far as the next dam anyway.

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"Water isn't going to hurt me, and now I've got the chance to see for myself these things that Walt's been telling about I'm going to do it. You mollycoddles can trot along. This is your Uncle Spud's calling day on beavers. If I don't get in by sundown you can send out a relief party. You'll probably find me taking dinner with the king or the president or whatever the main guy of the beaver tribe is."

"Just as you say," Upton replied, "only don't forget that there isn't any sundown on a rainy day, and get back in good season lest your dear comrades get the idea that you have overrun the trail."

A general laugh followed this sally, but Spud came back promptly.

"That's all right, Walt. I may have overrun my trail—once. And I may not be wise to the history of beavers, but I bet with all your fine observation I have seen some things that the rest of you haven't."

"The detective on his job! Spit it out, Spud, and get it out of your system," shouted Hal.

Spud grinned. "Well, who knows who

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visited this dam before we did this morning?" he demanded. No one answered.

"Old Mr. Bear," said Spud. "Found a nice fresh track in a soft place on the dam when we were coming along. Thought none of you saw it. More'n that, deer travel across here, and rabbits too, because I found their sign. Now tell me that I don't use my eyes!"

"You win!" replied Hal. "You're the boss little tracker of the Lone Wolves when you don't have to find yourself."

On the way back across the dam Spud pointed out the tracks and signs he had seen and Walter proffered the information that according to what he had read old beaver dams are regular highways for the wilderness people. At the end of the dam Spud turned off to pursue his investigations, and the others headed for camp.

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CHAPTER XIII

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER

It was characteristic of Spud that he should have decided to brave the rain and further investigate the beaver colony. His interest was thoroughly aroused and he simply had to see all that he could for himself. It was all very well to take the word of some one else for a thing when you couldn't investigate for yourself; but when you could it was up to you to prove that the other fellow knew what he was talking about, according to Spud's reasoning, and the present instance was a case in point.

He took one of the ponchos, slipping it over his head, and with his rifle, which he had brought along on the chance of getting a grouse or rabbit, he started to work his way around the southern side of the pond. In the first place it was the most practicable way of reaching the upper dams, and in the second place he felt sure that if there were any canals

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they would be on that side because of the steep banks on the northern side. Also for the same reason he felt sure that on that side he should find the scene of their lumbering operations.

As he threaded his way along the shore, following the line of least resistance, he became aware that there was a sort of trail, in places showing a faint semblance of a path and then again indicated only by the bent or occasionally broken twigs which had been rudely brushed by heavy moving bodies. None but a trained eye would have noticed this—under ordinary conditions Spud might not have. But just now every sense was on the alert, and his eyes took in and his mind registered these little but significant details almost automatically. At first he was uncertain whether the trail had been made by man or beast, but recalling what the sheriff had said about the trail to Big Bear Pond he concluded that this was it.

"I don't wonder it's little used," he growled as he struggled through a thicket of young birch, pushing aside the wet branches that threatened his face. "If I was going to be

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around these diggings long enough I'd get busy with my hatchet and trim out a bit along here. I don't suppose it happens half a dozen times a year that any one comes along here, unless it's a trapper in the winter. Hm-m-m! Now that's funny! That little twig there was broken within less than three days, for those leaves are only wilted, and not dried. Besides, that little strip of bark by which it hangs wouldn't stand much weather. The first good wind would break it. It's shoulder high, and that means that it is too high for a deer to have broken it. A bear might have done it, only he would have had to be standing up, and no bear in his senses would stand up in this beastly thicket. Maybe a moose has been through here. I'll have a look on softer ground for tracks. If this were nearer civilization or a camp I would say that a man had been along here; but that can't be, because nobody but the sheriff has been in the Hollow since we hit it, and he came in by the same trail we did, and went out the other way. Pat hasn't been up here, for I was with him the two days that he was away from camp. This morning was the first time that either of

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the others had been to the beaver pond unless one of them was lying low and playing foxy. Come to think of it, Walt didn't seem a bit interested in visiting these other dams. Wonder if he was up here yesterday and kept quiet about it. Anyway who ever or what ever broke that twig was going in the same direction that I am. I'll just keep my eyes open for more signs."

When he reached the next dam Spud forgot all about the trail in his interest in the beavers' work. It was apparent at a glance that this was a much more recent work than the big one. It afforded more of an opportunity to study the construction. Some freshly peeled sticks in it caught his eyes.

"Been repairing this lately. Must be they're using it, and there's something doing up above," he muttered. "Didn't find any recent cuttings on my way around here, so it must be that if they are doing any cutting it is somewhere up above. Well, I might as well see the whole thing, so I'll push along to the next dam and see what there is there."

It was but a short distance, perhaps three hundred yards, to the last dam. This proved

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to be the shortest and most recent of the three. In fact there was evidence that it was not yet completed. It seemed more like a great windrow of sticks and brush than a cunningly planned and cleverly wrought work with a distinct purpose. The water was seeping through all along the face of it and Spud was afforded an excellent chance to confirm what Walter had said about the method of construction and the way in which Nature assists the furry workers to fill up and solidify the dam. The gentle current was bringing down considerable drift stuff, especially small twigs, many of them freshly cut, and with the leaves still attached, grass, dead leaves, etc. These were sucked into the mass of the dam and sooner or later caught and held. The lower part of the dam below the water line had been plastered by the beavers, not absolutely water tight, but sufficiently to be a decided check to the flow of water and cause it to back up rapidly.

Spud examined several of the freshly cut twigs with interest. They were mostly poplar, though there were a few alder and birch, and evidently were trimmings from recent logging operations.

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"Must be that the harvest for winter has begun and that the cutting is going on somewhere above here," mused Spud. "Wonder if it can be the same beavers that are down in the big pond. Doesn't seem possible, and yet I don't see any other houses. Ha! What's that?"

A low place in the dam and, at the foot of it on the upper side, a short heavy poplar log, evidently the butt of a newly cut tree, had caught his attention. He examined the place with new interest and at once found evidence that other logs had been dragged over the dam at this point and rolled down into the lower pond. Apparently the log left there had been too heavy to get across. "Guess that log must have been intended for the food pile down by the houses in the big pond," muttered Spud. "Probably if I'd used my eyes better I'd have found a place where they have hauled across that second dam. I'll have a look on my way back. Now if I can find one of their canals and see the place where they are cutting I'll be satisfied. Hello! What's that?"

A distant crash as of a tree falling had

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caught his attention. It appeared to come from a little ravine that made back to the right and above the pond. At once the thought that perhaps the beavers were at work there flashed into his mind and with heart beating fast with excitement he at once began to work his way toward the point from whence had come the suspicious sound. Slowly, with infinite patience, Spud crept through the heavy undergrowth. The sodden condition of the ground was in his favor, but despite this and the care he took to avoid the snapping of a twig he had not reached a vantage point for observation when a sharp report, the slap of a broad tail on water, told him that his approach had been discovered. He knew that further stalking would be wasted effort, and so pushed rapidly ahead and in a few minutes the scene of recent activity was before him.

On the opposite slope of the ravine and perhaps a hundred feet above the level of the bottom was a small grove of poplars. From a point opposite this a newly dug ditch led out along the flat bottom and connected with the pond. This ditch or canal proved to be

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eighty-three feet long. It was about three feet wide and a foot and a half deep, the excavated soil piled on one side so neatly that it was hard to believe that the work had not been done by human labor. At the point where the canal entered the pond the water in the latter was but a few inches deep and the ditch had been carried out along the bottom of the pond until the desired depth of water was reached.

Crossing the canal Spud found a runway cut through a thicket of young growth up to the edge of the poplar grove, evidently for the purpose of getting the logs down to the water where they could be floated out to the pond and thence down to the food pile by the houses in the lower pond. The work of harvesting had but recently been begun, as less than a dozen trees had been cut. The stumps of these were from three to five inches in diameter and scattered chips of the lumbermen littered the ground. A newly cut tree, six inches through, lay on the ground, undoubtedly the one which Spud had heard fall. Several of the lower branches had already been cut off close to the trunk in a most work-

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manlike manner. One big branch was half cut through, and it was clear that the fur coated lumberman had been at work on this when alarmed by Spud's approach.

Spud picked up the big chip which evidently was the last one cut out and put it in his pocket. "I'll keep that for a souvenir," he muttered. "Gee whiz, but it's wonderful! And some folks say that animals have no intelligence, but do everything by instinct. It may be so, but when instinct lays out and carries through an engineering job like this all I can say is give me a little more instinct and less intelligence."

He munched a bit of chocolate and some raisins and crackers which he had brought along, waiting in the hope that the workers would return, but after an hour concluded that the beavers were too wary to come back during daylight. Feeling that he had seen all that he was likely to and that was of interest there he concluded to keep on and try to locate the trail to Big Bear Pond. It was only a little past noon and there was ample time. The rain still fell, but it was hardly more than a drizzle now. Besides, he was

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wet through from his waist down from pushing through the wet undergrowth, and could hardly get any wetter.

Following the upper shore of the beaver pond he shortly came to the brook which fed it. This proved to be a small sluggish stream, and a short distance up was lost in a swamp in which it appeared to have its source. He was woodsman enough to know that the trail would not lie through that if it could be avoided, and so swung around to the higher land on the south side. A thicket of young birches edged the swamp at this point and here he saw rabbit signs so plentiful that in the hope of getting a rabbit or two to take back for supper he quite forgot about the trail for the time being. Following a well-defined run he was abruptly halted by a bent birch. On each side of the run had been driven a stick, and caught in notches in these was a cross stick from which hung a loop of fine copper wire in such a way that unsuspecting bunny hopping along the path would thrust his head through it. The cross stick and noose were in turn fastened to the top of the bent birch, which held in position by the

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ends of the cross stick catching in the notches of the two side sticks. It was a snare!

A long, low whistle escaped Spud. At once his mind leaped back to the broken twig he had noted shortly after leaving the lower dam. "There has been somebody else in the Hollow since we arrived, and this looks as if he were still here," he muttered with conviction, and hastily peered through the thicket as if he expected to find the object of his suspicions watching him. At once all thought of rabbit hunting vanished. Here was something far more vital and thrilling—man hunting! Cautiously he explored the thicket, finding two more set snares and then one which had been sprung, the rigid form of a rabbit dangling pitifully in the air.

"Caught last night!" muttered Spud as he examined the little victim. "Suppose I may as well take him along. Whoever set that snare violated the law and deserves to lose his catch."

On second thought he decided to let it alone. He could make up his mind about it later and get the rabbit on his way back if he decided that he had a right to it. The matter of right entailed a fine point of ethics on which he was

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by no means clear. That the rabbit had been illegally killed there was no question, but there was a question as to whether he had a right to profit by the illegal act. It was analogous to the position of the "fence" who receives stolen goods. On the other hand, was it right to allow the guilty one to profit by his act? Spud scratched his head in perplexity as he continued his search of the thicket.

His first impulse, born of indignation on the discovery of the first snare, had been to destroy it, but a sense of caution had stayed him in time and he had left all the snares as he found them. The thing to do, he reasoned, was first to find out if possible who had set them, or, in any event, to determine if the person or persons were still in the vicinity. If he should spring the snares and then fail to locate the camp of the one who set them the latter would know on his first round of the snares that his presence was suspected and would decamp. And—Spud's heart leaped at the thought—it might be that this was the work of the outlaw for whom the sheriff was looking!

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He had worked to the outer edge of the thicket where it bordered a heavy stand of hemlock before he found another snare. This one had been sprung, and on the ground lay the torn remnants of the little victim. For some distance around the ground appeared to have been recently disturbed as if by a struggle of some kind. Spud was puzzled. It looked as if a heavy body had been dragged over the ground. He examined the disturbed area with painstaking care and presently was rewarded by finding in a soft place where the carpet of leaf mould had been torn up the clear imprint of a foot plainly showing the marks of big incurving claws.

"Wildcat!" exclaimed Spud under his breath. "Must have found bunny hanging in the snare and pulled him down. But what in the dickens happened then? Perhaps there were two, and they had a fight. Ha!"

The last exclamation was caused by the discovery of a trail leading up into the hemlocks, such a trail as might have been made by dragging something fairly heavy over the ground. Cautiously he started to follow it.

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"Looks as if a log had been dragged along here," he muttered.

It required no great ability to follow the course of whatever had been along there, and Spud pushed ahead rapidly but cautiously. Had he been an experienced trapper he would have read from the signs exactly what had occurred, but as it was he could only guess. The trail led up through a thicket of young hemlocks and plainly indicated a struggle of some kind all the way. Not only was the ground torn up, but in places some of the young trees were bruised and barked. Beyond the thicket the ground was comparatively open for a short distance and here it was apparent that the going had been easier for whatever had been dragged there.

In his eagerness Spud grew careless. The thought that there might be danger for him when he should reach the end of the broad trail did not once enter his head. His curiosity was thoroughly aroused and he had but one thought—to find out what had happened back there among the birches. Glancing ahead he saw the upturned roots of a great tree blown over in some storm which

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had swept through the Hollow, and the trail led straight over to this. A trapper or trained woodsman of experience would have approached this with caution. Not so Spud! Increasing his stride he hurried forward, intent on solving the mystery as soon as possible.

As he turned the end of the fallen giant an indescribably savage, spitting snarl greeted him from the tangle of a windfall of which the tree formed the outer edge. It was followed instantly by a huge gray form springing straight at his face. It was a Canada lynx, the lucivee of the North. But at that moment Spud was in no condition for the identification of species in natural history. To him, as he later confessed, it was nothing short of an animal devil—all teeth and claws and savage yellow eyes. With a wild yell of mingled surprise and fright he leaped back, tripped over a root and fell, striking his head on a log. Then followed oblivion.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE HIDDEN CAMP

WHEN Spud recovered consciousness he lay for a few seconds idly wondering where he was and what was the matter. He was still dazed. Vaguely, like a shadowy dream, a vision of a terrible monster, mostly teeth and claws, floated through his mind and unconsciously he moved ever so little. Instantly an ugly snarl sounded so close at hand that involuntarily he drew away from it, and in that instant his brain cleared. His first thought was surprise that he did not feel the teeth or claws of the beast he was sure had knocked him down. His next was to get away from that immediate neighborhood as quickly as he could. He scrambled to his feet a bit unsteadily and plunged across to the edge of the birch thicket, expecting with every frightened jump to be attacked from the rear.

But nothing happened, and by the time he had reached the thicket he had begun to re-

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cover his nerve in some measure and to think with some degree of clearness. There he paused to reconnoiter and get a mental grasp on himself and the situation. His head ached a bit from the bump which had put him out of business, but it was nothing serious. He had no means of knowing how long he had been unconscious, but he suspected that it was only for a minute or two. Barring his sore head he was all right. There was not even a scratch to show for his adventure. He could see his hat close to the upturned roots of the fallen tree, and protruding from a tangle of brush at one side was the barrel of his rifle. He scowled at it in perplexity. To go back and get it might be to invite another attack, for that snarl had been at no great distance from where the rifle now lay. In fact it had seemed almost in his very ear as he lay there.

"A pretty mess I've got myself into!" he grumbled. "If I go back to camp without my hat and rifle I'll never hear the end of it. Why in the deuce didn't the critter finish me when he had me down? Must be some reason. I've always heard that a bobcat won't attack unless cornered, and that they're nothing but

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big sneaking cowards anyway. I hadn't cornered that critter, so what made it jump at me like that? And why didn't it sneak away when it had the chance? I believe the blamed beast is still in that windfall."

He picked up a small stick and threw it so that it rattled against the roots of the fallen tree. The response was prompt and to the point. It was a vicious snarl. Needless to say it added nothing to Spud's peace of mind, nor did it aid him in thinking of a solution of his predicament. That rifle he must have. He had fully made up his mind to this. But to try to get it unarmed would be the rankest kind of folly. A cold shiver ran down his spine at the mere thought of facing that thing which had sprung at him from the windfall. Instinctively he looked around for a weapon, but there was nothing but rotten sticks available.

Then for the first time he remembered his scout knife. It was the work of but a few minutes to select a straight young sapling about two inches through and cut from this a three-foot club. With this in his hand Spud felt his courage return. Removing his

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poncho he wrapped it around his left arm as a protection in case of attack and smiled grimly as, with the club in his right hand, he prepared to advance. His sense of humor, always keen, cropped out now. "Regular little wild animal trainer!" he murmured half audibly. "Anyhow, I've always read that this is the approved method of meeting a wild beast at close quarters—let 'em chew your protected arm while you beat out their brains with the club. Sounds good, but—well, here's a chance to try it. Let me see; seems to me I've heard that all critters are afraid of the human voice. Guess I'll throw a few scares into this one before I go any nearer."

Thereupon he yelled fiercely, advanced a few steps and yelled again. But if the animal was intimidated by Spud's display of verbal fierceness it made no sign. Somehow the silence seemed ominous. Spud paused irresolutely.

"If I knew just exactly where the critter is I'd feel better. I believe I'll see if I can get a rise out of him from another direction."

Putting the thought into action he made a

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detour and slowly approached the windfall from the upper end of the fallen tree. There he paused uncertainly. There was no sign or sound. Again he tried the effect of a yell, but, as he later expressed it, "there was nothing doing." With his club he rapped the trunk of the tree sharply. This time he drew a response, a sharp spitting ending in a snarl. It came from a point seemingly under the windfall at the other end of the tree just beyond the upturned roots.

"Same old place! I guess I've got you located now," said Spud. "Wonder if I can drive you out!" He gathered some sticks and with these bombarded the place where the animal was hidden. The only result was to produce a volley of spits, snarls and growls. "Bound to stick, eh? Well, I hope you'll keep of the same mind while I get that rifle!" Spud's courage was growing in proportion as he realized the animal's disinclination to show himself.

Retracing his steps he once more approached the rifle from the direction of the birch thicket, advancing a step and then pausing, his club gripped ready for instant use. An

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occasional low growl was the only evidence that the hidden animal was aware of his approach. At last he reached a point where the rifle was almost within reach. The mass of roots prevented him seeing what was going on under the windfall and at the same time protected him from direct attack from that direction. Holding his breath and with pounding heart he leaned forward and grasped the muzzle of the gun. Drawing it to him with a sharp movement he instantly threw it to his shoulder, cocking it as he did so. An uneasy stir in the windfall and a spitting snarl a shade more spiteful than before were the only results.

Hastily backing away Spud drew a long breath of relief. With the rifle in his hands he felt immeasurable relief. To be sure it was only a twenty-two, but it was of high power, and the very fact that he had any kind of a gun was ground for a return of confidence.

"If I can work around there to the right where I can see clear of those confounded roots maybe I can get a glimpse of the brute and see what he looks like," he thought, and

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with rifle ready and finger on the trigger cautiously worked over to the desired position.

As the windfall came fully into view he stared into the tangle eagerly. At first he saw nothing to indicate that a living animal was hiding there. Presently, however, he became aware of two points of light in an opening under the thickest part of the pile of brush and then gradually a fierce, gray-whiskered face, out of which two savage greenish-yellow eyes glared unwinkingly, took form. Involuntarily he drew back a step or two.

"A lynx!" he gasped. "A Canada lynx!"

Spud was a bit nonplussed. If he had had Pat's rifle he would not have hesitated an instant. But the little twenty-two was never intended for game of this size. Common sense told him to leave well enough alone and beat a retreat while the going was good. But what a feather in his cap it would be if he could lug such a prize as this back to camp! A foolhardy impulse to risk a shot took possession of him. Slowly he lifted the rifle and as slowly lowered it again. Should he? Meanwhile the two spots of light glared at him balefully.

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"If I can put a shot through one of those eyes perhaps it will reach the brain. I guess that's my only chance," he thought.

Once more he raised the rifle and endeavored to draw a bead on one of those glowing coals. Just as he pulled the trigger they disappeared. The animal had moved and Spud heard the bullet strike in the brush. Hastily throwing another cartridge into place from the magazine he awaited a half expected rush, but beyond a slight movement and another outburst of spitting and snarling nothing happened. A moment later he made out the grim whiskered visage peering at him again a trifle to the right of its former position. He now advanced slowly and cautiously, with his rifle covering the animal, until he was within five yards. The only effect was to cause the lynx to withdraw ever so little.

"If I can't pot him at this distance I deserve to get chewed up," he thought, and once more and with all the care of which he was capable brought his sights to bear on one of the unwavering eyes. This time at the sharp crack of the rifle there was a half smothered screech, a lurch forward which

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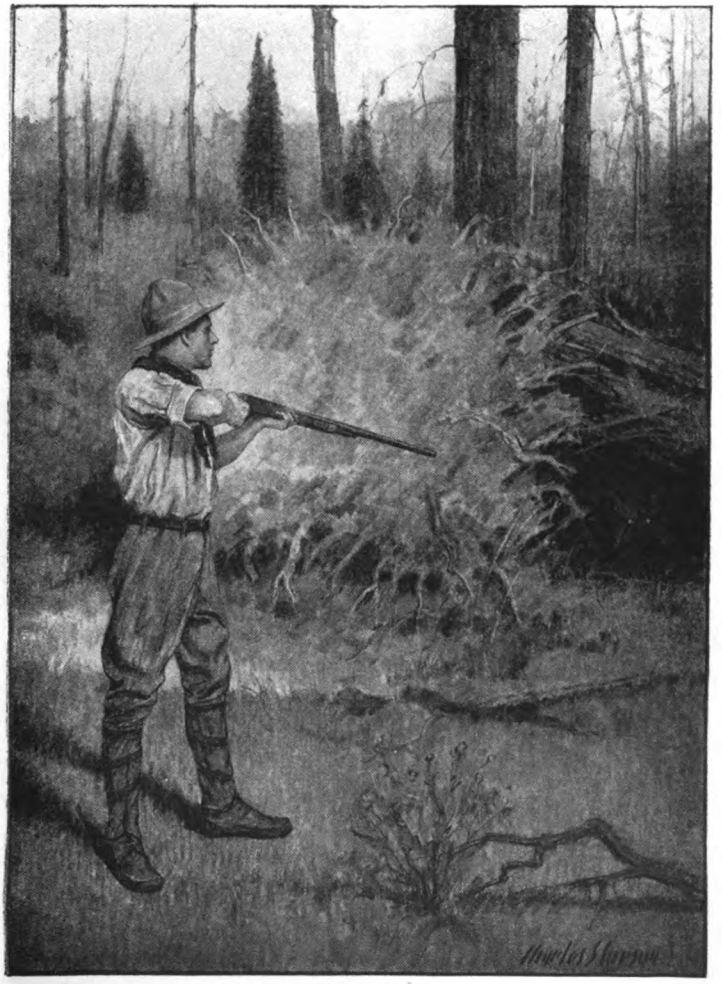

HE RAISED THE RIFLE

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brought the animal half out from his hiding-place, and then after a few spasmodic kicks the big creature lay still. The shot had gone true.

Spud had hastily backed away at the first movement and now at a safe distance anxiously watched for some sign of life. But there was none and after a little he ventured nearer. A sudden sense of elation overwhelmed him, but his fright was too recent for him to forget caution. He threw a stick at the inert body. Then cutting a long pole he poked it gently, and then vigorously. At last, convinced that the animal was dead, he approached and attempted to drag the body out. He could not budge it; something held it fast. Wonderingly he peered into the mass of brush and in an instant understood the seemingly inexplicable behavior of the animal and also the meaning of the broad trail from the birch thicket. The lynx was held fast by one hind leg in the grip of a trap, and this in turn was fastened to a heavy clog.

It was the dragging of the latter which had torn up the ground and it was the weight of it which had cut short the spring of the

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animal when he had launched himself at Spud. Later, when the animal had sought shelter under the windfall, the chain had become caught among the branches, and this accounted for the animal's refusal to either retreat or come forth.

Freeing the trap Spud dragged his prize out where he could see it to better advantage. The lynx was a big fellow, scarcely less savage looking in death than in life, and as Spud looked at the cruel teeth framed in a setting of long gray hair, at the tufted ears and the great paws armed with wicked looking claws, it was clear that he had brought to an inglorious end a life of many years in the evil ways of the stealthiest prowler of the wilderness, and he shuddered at the thought of what might have happened but for the hampering clog.

An examination of the trap started his thoughts along the old line first awakened by the discovery of the rabbit snares. Whoever had set those snares had set this trap. He didn't question this at all. And whoever it was the trapper was somewhere in that vicinity. Had it been later in the season the finding of the trap would have meant nothing so

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far as the camp of the trapper was concerned, for a trap line is usually many miles in length. But finding it in connection with the snares was significant. It meant that there was a hidden camp not far away. Of this Spud was by now thoroughly convinced. He scowled down at the prize stretched out at his feet and tried to decide what he should do. Should he go back to camp and lay his suspicions, which amounted to conviction, together with the evidence to support them, before the others, or should he try to locate the trapper and then report?

"I'm up here, and I may as well have a look around. It won't do any harm, and I may discover something more," he thought. "Wonder what I'd better do with this fellow."

And right then another thought came to him that for the time being put everything else out of his head. Had he a right to the big gray beast lying at his feet? It was the problem of the rabbit in the snare over again, but with a difference—there was no illegality in the trapping of the lynx.

Spud sat down on the trunk of the big hemlock and with his chin in his hands, his

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elbows on his knees, gazed moodily at the big cat while he fought a bitter battle with himself.

"I shot him! I shot him! Of course he's mine!" he repeated fiercely to himself over and over again. "Who's got a better right to him?"

"The trapper," was the prompt reply of the still small voice within. "It's the law of the woods, and justice, that whatever is caught in a trap is the property of the one who set the trap. The lynx doesn't belong to you, and you know it."

"But the fellow, whoever he is, is an outlaw. Anyway he's a lawbreaker, and the proof of it is the rabbit hanging back there in that snare, and also those other snares," argued the tempter.

"Two wrongs never yet made a right, and no matter what he's done this is that other chap's property, and you can't get around it," persisted the better self.

"What's the odds? He'll never know who took it. And if he did find out you've got the goods on him with those snares and he wouldn't dare open his head. He owes it to you for the fright you got and that bump on

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the head. Besides, you don't know that he's around here, anyway. He may have left, probably has, and that poor brute would have starved to death and done no one any good."

"A Scout's honor is to be trusted." It seemed as if the words fairly leaped out at him—the very first rule of the Scout law. "A Scout's honor is to be trusted."

Instantly Spud's face cleared. "You bet it is!" he said emphatically, speaking aloud. "You bet it is, and I'm a Scout. Right and wrong, honor and law, are the same in the wilderness as anywhere else, and it's a darned poor Scout who can't be trusted wherever he is. That critter isn't mine. The thing for me to do is to leave it right here and try to find the fellow it does belong to. Perhaps he'll sell it to me. I want that skin about as badly as ever I wanted anything in my life, and I'm going to have it if I can get it on the square. If I can't, all right. I'll be able to look myself straight in the face the next time I see a looking glass, anyhow!"

Spud now had a new incentive to hunt for the hidden camp he felt sure was somewhere near, and he set about the task with renewed

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energy and determination. Leaving the lynx where it lay he picked up his rifle and slowly began to work around the outer edge of the birch thicket, studying the ground and trees with the utmost care. He reasoned that the snares were set in order to get a supply of meat in the easiest way, and so of course they would not be far from the camp of the man who set them. That meant that the camp was probably within a radius of half a mile. In fact the contour of the land was such that any other possibility was unreasonable. This was the head of the Hollow and the mountains hemmed it in closely on all sides. No man in his senses would pitch his camp on the steep slopes rising on all sides, and therefore it must be in the Hollow itself.

"Probably there is a little draw back into the hills here somewhere like the one where the beavers are at work," reasoned Spud. "That would account for our not seeing any smoke from camp. If I stick to the edge of this thicket I'm bound to find signs somewhere of where that chap goes in and out. If I can just get the direction a little good scouting ought to locate him."

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Presently he became aware that the thicket gradually made back toward the hills and then abruptly ended. At this point he came to a dry gully, evidently the bed of a mountain brook in the season of freshets. In the bottom of this he soon found evidence that some one had passed that way more than once —recently disturbed pebbles, bent twigs and in one or two damp places what appeared to be the impress of a foot.

"I've got him now!" he exulted, and pushed ahead up the gully, walking rapidly but cautiously.

Gradually the gully widened and presently opened out into a tiny circular hollow from all sides of which the hills rose sharply. Spud paused to study the scene. A heavy stand of hemlock clothed the hills to the very bottom of the steep slopes, while in the hollow itself was a mixed stand of birch, maple and a few young hemlocks. To the right and on the far side appeared a suspicious opening among the trees and brush. Slowly and with the utmost caution Spud worked his way around to get a view of this. The blood pounded through his veins with excitement.

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This was real stalking! On hands and knees he crawled to the shelter of a young hemlock from behind which he felt sure he would be able to see the whole of what he was convinced was a tiny clearing. Nor was he disappointed. There before him was the hidden camp!

To be sure, it was not much of a camp—a hunter's lean-to thatched with hemlock, a fireplace in front, a black pail on its side close by, and a rusty looking frying-pan on the end of a log—but it was a camp, and undoubtedly the one for which he was searching. Bits of rabbit skin and feathers of grouse littered the ground near the fireplace, and hanging from a corner of the lean-to was a deerskin.

At first glance the camp appeared deserted, but presently it seemed to Spud that he could make out a form in the interior of the lean-to. He strained his eyes and after a little was sure that he detected a slight movement.

"Probably asleep," he thought. "I believe I'll work around back and get a closer view." This was not a difficult matter, for there was plenty of cover, and the boy was soon where he could see clearly. On a torn blanket

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spread on a bed of browse lay a man. He was roughly dressed and unkempt, and his face was turned away so that it was impossible to judge of his age. A rifle stood against one end of the lean-to and a battered hat lay on the ground. There was little else to be seen. Altogether it was as desolate a scene as could well be imagined.

The sleeper tossed uneasily and Spud caught the sound of his voice. "Must be having bad dreams. Guess I'll take a chance of waking him up and see if I can't make a dicker with him for that lynx," he thought, and stepped out into the open and boldly approached the lean-to.

The sleeper took no heed but continued to mutter. Once he cried out sharply.

"Hello there!" shouted Spud.

Instantly the man half raised and turned a terror stricken face to him. A pair of wild eyes stared out from a hollow face covered with a beard of several weeks' growth.

"Don't touch me!" he shrieked. "I tell you I dinna do it! I dinna! I dinna!" He sank back weakly and his voice trailed off into an unintelligible mutter.

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"Loony!" gasped the startled Spud. "Must be he's sick and out of his head!"

A wave of pity swept over him and he hurried forward. As he did so his foot hit something. Mechanically he glanced down to see what it was. A moccasin lay upturned, and across the sole was a patch!

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CHAPTER XV

FIRST AID

WHEN Spud had parted with his companions at the beaver dam Upton and his two followers had returned directly to camp. Pat had a good fire going in the cabin in anticipation of the need of it to dry out the wet clothing, and had busied himself by patching sundry places in the roof where water was working through. After a hearty lunch of venison stew prepared by Pat in true hunter style the four boys idled the afternoon away swapping stories, listening to Plympton's record, which he had brought up to date, studying the maps and speculating whether or not they had a ghost of a chance to find Lost Trail. By the middle of the afternoon they began to wonder what had become of Spud. The rain had stopped, but the clouds still hung low and threatening.

"Bet he's lost himself again," said Hal as

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the afternoon waned with no sign of the sunshine-maker.

"He couldn't," declared Walter. "Not up that end of the Hollow, anyway. A tenderfoot couldn't lose his way there because he'd have to climb a mountain to do it. You don't suppose anything can have happened to him, do you? He might have slipped and sprained a leg or something. Spud's no tenderfoot, and he sure would know enough to follow down the Hollow to get back to camp."

"Don't ye be worrying about the sunshine-maker," broke in Pat. "'Tis the hunting fever he be afther having, and he's got it bad. Most loike he's hunting grouse, and begorra Oi hope he gets some. Oi could ate a whole wan for me dinner this very noight."

But as afternoon wore away and the dull gray began to give way to a somber twilight in the deeper places, promising the early fall of night, even Pat began to be a bit disturbed, though he sought to hide it. He moved about uneasily and finally built a roaring big fire outside while Walter and Hal prepared dinner. He was just on the point of suggesting that he take the trail to the beaver ponds to

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see if he could get some trace of Spud when that young gentleman burst out of the bushes so spent with running that he was literally "all in." He was minus his hat, poncho and rifle. He was wet and disheveled. His face was scratched as if he had forced his way through thick growth regardless of branches, as indeed he had. He looked as if he had fallen more than once. His eyes were wide with excitement and anxiety, and he held a hand to one side as he panted for breath.

Pat instinctively reached for his rifle. He said afterward that he expected to see nothing less than an angry she-bear charge out at Spud's heels.

"I've—found—him!" gasped Spud, sitting down on the nearest log weakly and laboring for breath enough for speech. "He's—back —there—and—he needs help!"

His four comrades stared at Spud as if they thought him suddenly bereft of reason.

"Who's back there? Who needs help?" demanded Walter.

"The—the man the sheriff's—looking for." Spud was still struggling for breath.

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"Say that again!"

"How do you know?"

"What are you giving us?"

All talking at once the Lone Wolves crowded around Spud, too excited to give him a chance to get his breath. That he had really discovered the outlaw they could hardly credit, but that he had had an exciting experience of some kind his very appearance was ample evidence. Presently, as the pain in his side subsided and he was able to breathe with some degree of comfort, he briefly told of the hidden camp and the helpless man lying there.

"He's got a broken leg," declared Spud. "I saw that something was the matter with his right leg, and examined it the best I could. Had to rip open his trousers leg with my knife to get a good look at it, and say, it's something fierce, believe me! From the knee up it's all swollen and discolored. I felt of it as gently as I could and I'm sure it's broken. He's got a fever and is crazy as a loon. He's awfully weak, and I have a hunch he hasn't had anything to eat since the accident happened, and by the looks I should say that

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was at least two days ago. Wasn't much I could do but hustle for you fellows. Tied his legs together just below the knees and again at the ankles and bound a long stick the length of his good leg to keep him from thrashing around. Don't know as that was the thing to do, but I couldn't think of anything else, and he's just got to be kept from threshing on account of that broken bone. The inflammation is mighty bad there now. Tore my big neckerchief up to tie him. Then I covered him with my poncho and nearly broke my neck to get here. Didn't seem right to leave him, but I had to. Now let's get a move on and get back there!"

"One minute, Spud," interposed Walter. "What makes you think he is the man the sheriff is looking for?"

"By things he keeps muttering and his fright even when he was out of his head when he heard my voice. Keeps saying, 'I didn't do it! I didn't do it!' over and over, only he says it in Scotch. Besides, the little finger on his left hand is missing. He's only a young fellow, and whether he is an outlaw or not he's got something on his mind, and he

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sure is up against it good and plenty. Come on—let's get busy."

All now turned to Upton, upon whom as leader devolved the responsibility of deciding what should be done. He had been doing some rapid thinking as Spud talked and now snapped out his orders sharply.

"Spud, you get some food into you the first thing you do. You've got to be in good shape for what's ahead of us. In fact, all hands better turn in and eat a good dinner; we'll need it. Fifteen minutes or so won't make much difference to that poor chap back there. It isn't as if he were bleeding to death or anything like that. Three of us will go back with Spud and the other one will have to stay here and keep things in shape in camp and have things ready for us when we get back. We'll probably have to bring that fellow here, and that means the four strongest will have to go. Guess it's up to you, Plympton, to stay. Won't be afraid to stay alone all night, will you, Sister?"

Plympton grinned. "Not so's you'd notice it," he replied promptly. "Of course I'd like to go along, but I guess you're right about

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the need of having some one here, and probably I shall be of more use here than there."

"All right; that settles that!" replied Walter. "Hal, as soon as you are through eating dig out the first aid kit. Spud, you roll up a couple of blankets and put that coil of rope with them. By the way, it's getting dark pretty fast; do you think you can find the way back in the dark?"

"If ye plaze, Oi'll make some torches, and Oi'm thinking we'll have no throuble then," interrupted Pat.

"Good! That's your job, then!" returned Upton. "I wonder if we'd better make a litter before we start and take it along, or wait until we get there."

"Wait until we get there," replied Spud promptly. "It would be a nuisance to carry and we can make one there just as well as here; plenty of young saplings handy."

"Guess you're right," returned Upton. "Sister, we'll leave the dishes to you. Now, everybody get busy!"

By the time the needed things were ready Pat had returned with a number of long

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strips of birch bark four or five inches wide and a couple of green sticks about two feet long, and a couple of inches in diameter. Each of these he split at one end. Then folding one of the strips of bark several times he fastened it to one of the sticks by the simple expedient of forcing it into the split end. It now remained merely to light the bark and the torch would be ready for use. A second torch was made in the same way from the other stick.

Upton hurriedly but carefully inspected the things to be taken to make sure that nothing had been forgotten. In addition to the blankets, rope and first aid kit, were the long handled axe, a couple of drinking cups, two towels, a roll of erbswurst and several bouillon capsules. Satisfied that they had all that was needed, he gave the word to start. Pat at once lighted one of the torches at the fire and led the way with Spud at his heels, Hal next and Walter bringing up the rear.

It was a weird spectacle, that little procession with the flaring torch at its head entering the black forest. For some distance Plympton could trace their progress by the

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reflection of the light against the sky, but soon this was no longer visible, and the boy turned to his own duties. Meanwhile the four Lone Wolves pushed ahead rapidly on their errand of mercy. Pat was too good a woodsman to find much difficulty in following the trail to the upper dam. Skirting the upper pond they soon found the birch thicket where Spud had discovered the snares, and they had only to keep on the outer edge of this to find the gully leading to the hollow with the hidden camp.

They found the lone trapper just as Spud had left him. He was still out of his head, muttering and occasionally throwing out one arm, and as the four boys gathered around and looked down on the haggard face, doubly haggard looking in the glare from the torch, a great pity for the unfortunate man welled up in their hearts.

"You did just the right thing when you tied him up, Spud," said Walter. "I think we'll leave him tied for the time being. I guess the first thing to do is to make him as comfortable as we can, and let the leg alone for now. If it was a compound fracture it

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would be different, but it isn't, and so there's no wound to dress."

"What be a compound fracture?" demanded Pat. "Oi have heard mintion av ut many toimes, but never knew just what ut is."

"It's when the broken bone protrudes through the flesh. Then you have a break and a wound besides," explained Walter. "Unless there is more than one break this is a simple fracture of the femur. We can tell better when we have reduced that swelling somewhat. His head is hot and he's got a fever, all right. The first thing to do is to get a rousing good fire going and get this place as warm and dry as possible. Do you suppose you can find wood dry enough to burn after this rain, Pat? It would be easy enough by daylight, but I'm afraid it will be a tough job in the night."

"Lave ut to me," replied Pat, making a new torch by the simple process of fixing a fresh supply of bark in one of the old handles.

"Hal, you go with him to help bring it in," ordered Walter. "I wonder if there is a spring anywhere about here."

"Sure! I found it before I started for you

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fellows. It's only a few steps. Want some water?" Spud was eager to be doing something to help.

"Yes. Guess we ought to have brought along something to get it in. I didn't because I took it for granted that there would be something here."

Spud remembered the pail he had seen on the ground that afternoon and in a few minutes was back with it in triumph. Taking the torch he went in quest of the water. Meanwhile the ringing blows of the axe proclaimed that Pat had found a dead tree and the crash of it soon followed. Then Hal appeared with an armful of dry splinters cut from the heart of it and a fire was soon going. By the time it was well started Pat brought in some logs cut from the tree and it was not long before a huge blaze directly in front of the lean-to was giving both heat and light.

While Spud prepared a cup of hot bouillon Walter tenderly bathed the hot face of the sufferer and laid one of the towels wrung out in cold water across his forehead. With the other towel a cold compress was applied to the injured leg to reduce the inflammation if possi-

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ble. The patient was covered with blankets and a little of the hot bouillon fed him by means of a spoon which Upton had thought to slip in his pocket.

There seemed nothing else to do unless it was decided to attempt to set the broken leg at once, or to attempt to move the sufferer to the cabin that night, and to discuss these matters the boys gathered around the fire.

"Of course," began Walter, "the sooner that leg is set the better, and I suppose we can do it right here, but there are reasons why it would be best to wait until we get him to the cabin. A few hours more or less at this stage isn't going to make any particular difference."

"Do you suppose we can set it?" asked Spud. "Of course I've read all about how to do it, as every Scout is bound to, and we've all seen the thing demonstrated at Woodcraft, but actually doing it is a very different thing, especially when the thing is two or three days old. I—I—say, do you honestly think we can?"

"We've got to. There are no ifs or ands about it." Upton's jaw was set in a way that his comrades had learned to know meant that his mind was absolutely made up. "I felt of

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that leg as carefully as I could, and one end of the bone has slipped past the other. The leg has got to be set, and it's straight up to us, with no chance to dodge. The only question is shall we do it here or wait until we get to the cabin?"

"You took a special course in first aid when you took the leadership of that patrol in New York, didn't you, Walt?" asked Hal.

Upton nodded.

"Did you ever see a bone actually set?"

Again Upton nodded. "Helped a surgeon set a broken arm once."

Spud uttered such a profound sigh of relief that the others could not but smile. "That's going to help some," said he. "I thought we were all green and I confess I feel better. If the job can be done here why not get it over?"

"Partly because I think we could work better at the cabin, but chiefly because we have got to carry him there anyway, and at best it's going to be a hard trip for him. No matter how careful we are he is bound to get some jolts, and if we set the bone first we may have to do it all over again when we get there. The risk of the splints slipping is very great—too great, it seems to me."

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"I should think we could bind them so tight that they simply couldn't slip," said Spud.

"And stop the circulation!" Hal broke in.

"That's so! I didn't think of that," replied Spud.

"You've got to think of everything in matters of this kind. It doesn't do to forget. Now what do you fellows think about setting that leg?"

"Lave ut be 'til we get to the cabin," replied Pat decisively, and in this opinion the others concurred.

"Then that's settled," returned Upton. "Now the question is as to whether we shall try to take him there to-night or wait till morning."

"Wait for daylight! There's no question at all about that in my mind," spoke up Hal. "We'd only torture the poor chap trying to get him through that thick stuff even with torches, and we'd use ourselves up so that we wouldn't be fit to tackle the bone setting when we got there. I think the thing to do is to make him as comfortable as possible here to-night and then start as soon as it is light enough to see clearly and pick our way."

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"'Tis sense ye be shpaking," said Pat. "We could make ut to-night if we had to, but 'twould be tough on him and would about finish us up. If the docther says there is no harm done by shtaying Oi be thinking the best thing we can do is to shtay. 'Twill not be an aisy job at best, and we've got to make ut as aisy for him as we can."

And so it was decided. The boys took turns watching by the sick man to wring the towels out in cold water as fast as they became heated, and to give him occasional sips of the hot bouillon. Those not engaged in that duty sat by the fire and speculated as to who the man was and if he really was the one wanted, and if so whether he was guilty or not, meanwhile keeping up the fire. And so the long night wore away. The application of the cold cloth to the fevered head had the desired effect, and gradually the mutterings ceased and the patient fell into the sleep of utter exhaustion. He was still sleeping when the first faint streaks of light in the east proclaimed the breaking of a new day and the boys began to prepare for the task before them.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE AMATEUR SURGEONS

It was during the night watch that Spud told in detail of the way in which he had discovered the camp. It was his first mention of the lynx. In fact, he had hardly thought of it himself. So much had been crowded into the last few hours that his early adventure seemed almost unreal. It would have seemed quite so but for the bump on the back of his head. His description of his feelings when the animal had sprung at him and later when he was trying to get his rifle went far to relieve the tension of overwrought nerves produced by the anxiety over the task before them. It was Walter's suggestion that Spud bring in his prize as soon as it was light enough to see. So in the gray of dawn he once more threaded the birch thicket, destroying the snares which he had left unsprung the day before. In one of these he found another furry little victim, and this time he had no

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compunctions about appropriating it, together with the one he had left hanging on his previous visit. It was not unlikely, indeed it was probable, that the meat would be needed.

Meanwhile Pat and Hal were laying out an easier trail back to camp, avoiding the thick brush where possible, and where necessary cutting a broad path through it. At best it was going to be no easy task to carry the injured man, and for his sake as well as for their own it was deemed best to take the time to prepare the way. By the time they returned Walter and Spud had made a litter by lashing a blanket between two stout poles cut from saplings, and had ready a pail of hot pea soup made from the erbswurst, knowing full well that empty stomachs would be poor preparation for the work before them.

The trapper had wakened and was rational. There was a pitifully wild look in his eyes such as one sometimes sees in the eyes of a hunted animal. Beyond inquiring what they intended to do with him he asked no questions, and seemed somewhat relieved when they told him that he was to be taken to the cabin. On their part the boys were considerate

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enough to avoid anything which might appear to be an effort to inquire into his personal affairs. He said his name was John Gordon, but hesitated so in replying to the question that the boys made up their minds that this was a fictitious name, and forebore further questioning. He was given as much of the pea soup as Walter dared allow him, and ate it as if famished, as indeed he was. Then as tenderly and carefully as possible he was lifted to the litter, his face evidencing the pain that the least movement caused him, and the slow hard march to the cabin was begun.

When his companions had melted into the blackness of the forest the night before Plympton had at once busied himself with preparations for their return. He did not expect them before daylight, for he knew that even then the task of getting their burden through the thick growth would be no small one, but there was the bare possibility that they might try to make it in the night. Anyway, it might be that one of them would have to return for something needed. So he built a rousing fire as a beacon and from time to time replenished this all through the night.

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He also kept a fire going in the cabin fireplace that the cabin might be thoroughly warm and dry. From the five beds he selected the best of the balsam and with this made a thick, springy bed in the better of the two lower bunks, and over this spread a blanket. It was little enough that he could do for the expected guest, but that little he did to the best of his ability. At the first hint of daylight he got things ready for a quick and hearty meal and then once more sat down to wait.

The sun had been up some hours when the little procession emerged from the woods. The faces of the four carriers looked drawn and weary. The long carry had taxed them to the utmost. It had been slow and difficult. Despite the cutting out of the worst places by Pat and Hal the going had been rough and hard, and with all their care the sufferer had received jolts that more than once brought forth a smothered groan. They had warned Plympton of their approach with a Woodcraft yell and he had at once started breakfast, so that by the time they arrived a kettle of steaming cocoa was ready, the bacon was fried and he was just turning the first panful of flap-

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jacks. Gordon was at once made as comfortable as possible in the bunk prepared for him. Breakfast was rather a silent meal. Plympton saw that his companions had had a hard night of it and forbore to question them. They on their part were too tired to talk, and besides the hardest task of all, the setting of the broken leg, was before them.

But a good meal is a wonderful restorer of spirits. When the last flap-jack and the last crumb of bacon had disappeared Upton sprang to his feet. "Fellows," said he, "I feel better, and I guess you do too. We've got an ugly job before us, and the sooner it is over the better. We've got to set that leg; it won't do to let it go any longer. When that is done we'll have a conference and decide what is to be done next. It looks to me as if the search for Lost Trail is all off. This fellow has got to be taken care of, and we've got to get help. But we won't worry about that now. I've found that in following a new trail the thing to do is to keep your eyes on the blaze in sight and not worry about the one you haven't reached. The first thing now is to get splints. Pat, do you suppose that the bark on a spruce will

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slip enough for you to get it off? It's a little late for barking, I guess, but perhaps you can find one that will slip. Basswood will, anyway, but we may have to hunt some time to find a tree of the right size, while there are plenty of young spruces that will do."

"Lave ut to me," replied Pat promptly. "Just tell me how big a piece you be afther wanting and Oi'll get ut."

"I want two pieces," said Walter. "Pick out a young tree a little smaller than his leg and take off the bark in two pieces by vertical cuts on opposite sides. One piece must be long enough to reach from his armpit to his ankle and the other from the crotch to the same point. Better take Hal along with you. The rest of us will be ready to use them by the time you return. By the way, Hal, gather a good supply of moss from the trees while you are about it."

While Pat and Hal were in quest of the bark and moss the others spread the spare blankets on the cabin floor and on them gently placed the injured man, thus giving them needed room for the work to be done. His legs were unbound, his trousers and un-

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derwear removed and the injured leg gently bathed with soap and hot water. The cold compress had reduced the swelling somewhat during the night, though the leg was still an ugly looking thing. With his knife Walter ripped up his extra suit of underwear into strips wherewith to pad the splints. The largest antiseptic bandage was made ready for use, and the amateur surgeon was ready for the splints.

Pat and Hal returned with the bark and moss sooner than Upton had hoped for. Under his direction the two pieces of bark were padded with moss on the concave side, and this was kept in place by the strips of cloth from his underwear. This would also prevent any chafing from the edges of the bark. They were now ready for the crucial test. Spud at his own request was assigned to hold the injured man under the shoulders. Pat, because of his strong hands and nerve, was to pull the bone into place, while Walter would manipulate the two ends until they fitted.

"Remember, Pat," warned Walter as the big fellow gently grasped the leg just above the knee, "it must be a perfectly straight

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pull without the slightest bit of twisting. Begin easily, increasing the pull slowly until I say stop." Pat nodded and Walter gave the signal. Gordon's face went white under its heavy coat of tan as the pull increased, but he grimly ground his teeth and made no sound. To the two looking on and doing nothing it seemed an interminable length of time before Upton warned Pat to hold right where he was. Then as gently as possible Upton began to work the two ends of the broken bone in an effort to fit them together. Presently there was a faint audible thud—the bone was set.

A universal sigh followed that faint sound. The tension on all had been intense. Great beads of perspiration stood out on Spud's face and Walter afterward confessed that he was wringing wet. The splints were now applied, the longer one on the outside and the other on the inside, and these were bound firmly in place by means of the two-inch wide bandage. At the same time great care was taken not to bind so tight as to impede circulation. The two legs once more tied together, Gordon was given some hot soup and made as comfortable as possible in the bunk. Then the Lone

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Wolves adjourned to a point out of ear-shot of the cabin.

Upton flung himself down wearily. "I'm all in," he confessed. "Seems foolish, especially as Pat did the real work, but I can't help it."

"Nothing foolish about it," insisted Hal. "I should think you would be all in for you're the one who has shouldered all the responsibility. Walt, we're mighty proud of you. Aren't we, fellows?"

"You bet we are!" Spud took it upon himself to reply for all. "When I found that poor chap I felt pretty nearly as helpless as he was himself. Didn't seem to me we ever could set that leg. I know I'd have flunked if it had been up to me. I propose three cheers for Dr. Upton!" He sprang to his feet in his usual impetuous way to lead the cheers, but a warning hand raised by Pat stayed him.

"Ut moight disturb him," said he, nodding toward the cabin.

"That's so!" exclaimed Spud. "I didn't think. But I've got to express my feelings somehow. I've kept 'em bottled up just as

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long as I can. I'm mighty proud to be even the cook of the Lone Wolves under such a leader. If I can't holler I've got to shake hands." He thrust out his left hand, and as Walter's met it he gave it a grasp that made Upton wince. The others followed suit, and in the warmth of those hand-grasps the young leader realized the depth of feeling which his comrades could express in no other way, and his face flushed with pleasure.

"It wasn't anything," he protested. "If I hadn't been here you fellows would have done it and done it just as well. It was up to me as leader to assume the responsibility, that's all. Now the question is, what is to be done next? Of course he ought to have a real doctor as soon as possible. I think that leg is set right, but we don't any of us know for sure. A doctor ought to see it. If there is anything wrong that poor chap may be a cripple for life. Where is the nearest doctor, Pat?"

"Woodcraft Camp," was the prompt reply. "We moight find one at a lumber camp or one of the villages up beyant, and then again we moight not. Docther Merriam we are shure

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av. 'Tis mesilf will start this minut and ye say the worrd."

Upton smiled. "I thought as much. In fact, it has seemed to me from the beginning that there is nothing for it but to send to Woodcraft for help. Not only is it necessary that a physician should see that leg as soon as possible, but some provision has got to be made for taking care of this fellow. It will be weeks before he can be taken out of here unless the Big Bear trail is such that he can be carried out that way. Sending back to Woodcraft seems almost like acknowledging our trip a failure, though of course it isn't, because it isn't for help for one of us. I don't see anything else to do, and I guess Pat is the one to make the trip. Oh, you needn't get ready to start now, Pat!" as that worthy began to tighten his belt as if to hit the trail at once. "You were up all of last night, and you've got to get a good rest before you start. It's a good forty mile hike; how long will it take you to do it, traveling light?"

"If Oi lave at daybreak Oi can make ut thot same noight. The last ten miles, ye remimber, will be a lumber road. If Oi make

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thot before dark there will be no throuble making the rest afther dark."

"Well, fellows," resumed Upton, "I think that it will be best for Pat to start back to-morrow morning. It may be that Dr. Merriam will get here the next day, but I doubt it. I think it will be at least the day after that. Meanwhile we have got to decide about our plans. It looks to me as if the Lone Wolves have made their trail as far as they will this year. We've got to stay and take care of Gordon—I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that isn't his name—until some one gets here who can stay with him or he can be gotten out. Another thing: I guess we all feel pretty sure that Spud made a pretty good guess as to who Gordon is. He told enough when he was out of his head to make it pretty certain that he is the man the sheriff is looking for. He may not be guilty, but there isn't much doubt that he is the man wanted. Now what are we going to do about that? I want to know just what the rest of you think about these things."

For a few minutes no one spoke. They were doing some hard thinking. The fact

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that they might have to give up their trip, probably would have to, had not seriously entered their heads. Hal was the first to speak.

"Sending Pat out to Woodcraft is the proper move, all right. I guess we are all agreed on that." The others nodded.

"As to giving up the trip, it seems to me that it is early to decide that," he continued. "Looks as if we'd have to, but a good deal depends on what the result of Pat's trip is. If Dr. Merriam should bring some one in with him to look after Gordon we may still have time to finish our trip, though finding Lost Trail is out of the question unless we happen to stumble on it by chance. Anyhow, we can be looking for it while Pat is away, for Gordon won't need more than one man with him at a time. About the sheriff I—I don't know. I hate to think of being an informer under the circumstances. It's too much like hitting a fellow when he's down. Besides, after all he may be innocent."

"I don't see as it is any of our business what he has done," broke in Spud. "He may be an outlaw, but we don't know it for sure. What we do know is that he is in a peck of

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trouble right now, and needs help, and it strikes me that putting the sheriff on his trail would be a mighty poor way of helping. If the sheriff happens along here and finds him why, that is another matter. By George, I hope he won't!"

"Will yez listen to the bye thot thought ut would be great fun to capture the outlaw and turn him over to justice!" chuckled Pat.

Spud flushed. "So I would have if we'd captured him in a fair hunt," he defended himself stoutly. "But this is different. I don't mind saying that I'm mighty sorry for the poor chap, and I don't believe that he did the thing he is wanted for. Anyhow, we are not likely to see the sheriff, and I don't see that it is up to us to go out of our way to notify him."

Plympton, who so far had taken no part in the conversation, now spoke. "I feel a good deal as Spud does, but it isn't a question of what we want to do but what we ought to do. Scouts are supposed to obey the law at all times, and to see that others obey it. Supposing this man is guilty as charged and thus has become a dangerous outlaw; aren't we in

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honor bound to protect our fellow men from him? I don't imagine that he'll get away, because the sheriff is bound to hear of him sooner or later and have a look at him. But that doesn't let us out. If he was well and strong and able to take care of himself we wouldn't have any compunctions in the matter, now would we? Our duty would be perfectly clear. At least we should think so. We should put the sheriff on his trail and go out of our way to do it. Isn't that true?

"Now we are letting sympathy and not sense of duty govern us," he continued as the others nodded. "I pity that poor chap with all my heart. I may as well own up right now and here that whatever he has done I'd like to see him get away. Anyhow, I'd hate to feel that I had helped to get him into more trouble. You all feel the same way. But supposing he gets well and does get away. He'll be hunted as an outlaw and sooner or later he'll be found. If he really is a desperate character he won't be taken without a fight and perhaps bloodshed. How shall we feel then? Supposing somebody should be killed. Wouldn't we always feel responsible

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for such a death? We don't know that this is the man wanted. If he isn't no harm will be done by notifying the authorities. If he is the man justice demands that he be brought to trial. I guess we all believe that he is the man, all right, and I guess we all feel that he is innocent of the crime with which he is charged. The question is, have we any right to pose as judges? I don't know as I've made my ideas very clear, but the long and short of it is it seems to me that we ought to do a lot of thinking before we decide one way or the other. He can't get away, that's a cinch. So why not let the matter rest until the doctor gets here? By that time perhaps we can see more clearly how this trail of duty blazes out. I don't believe the 'Big Chief' will decide the thing for us, because he isn't that kind, but perhaps he'll give us a lead we can follow out for ourselves."

"Misther Leader!" Pat spoke as if his mind was made up. "There be truth in what Plympton be saying. Oi say, lave the matter till Oi get back. In the manetime there be much to do. 'Tis more meat we will be afther nading now. Oi suggest, Misther Leader,

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thot ye order the loikes av yerself to bring in wan buck this day. A bit av a hunt will do ye good, and 'tis nading ut ye be. Oi will find ye a buck, or me blood's not Oirish."

Upton smiled. "I guess it is just as well that this conference should adjourn," said he. "The opinion seems to be unanimous on the matter of our present duty, which is to stay right where we are as long as we can be of service, and give up the rest of the trip if need be. Also we will wait until the doctor arrives before we come to a decision on the matter of notifying the sheriff. I think that by that time we will have found ourselves on this matter. Pat is right about the need of more meat. It will be a good thing for all of us to get busy on things that will take our thoughts off the present trouble for the time being. Pat, you will do no guiding to-day. You will rest and get yourself in shape for your long hike to-morrow. This is an order, Corporal Malone!" he added as Pat opened his mouth to protest. "It is Hal's turn to hunt, and I guess the rest of us will find enough to do about camp."

Now ordinarily Hal would have jumped at

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the chance to try his luck at deer hunting, but no one knew better than he Upton's fondness for the hunt or how much the latter had counted all summer on the possibility of getting a deer this fall.

"I'd like to be let off to-day, Mr. Leader," he drawled. "In the first place my nerves are in no condition for straight shooting, let alone the strain of still hunting. Besides, I've got some sleep to make up." He yawned and stretched as he finished.

Upton turned a speculative eye on Spud and Plympton. "Spud," said he, "you seem to have turned out to be the boss little hunter of this outfit. Why can't you turn guide and take Sister out for a chance at the meat?"

"Sorry," replied Spud promptly with a side wink at Plympton, "but I've got to go back after that lynx and my rifle. Pat's promised to help me skin the critter, and if it isn't done this afternoon I'll have to do it alone and probably botch the job."

"And if it's all the same to you I'm going with Spud. You know I haven't seen the hidden camp yet," Plympton hastened to say.

And so the matter was settled. Upton

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knew well enough that he was the victim of a kind-hearted conspiracy to give him the pleasure that meant so much to him, but it had been done in such a tactful way that he could not refuse. Pat gave him careful directions as to where he was most likely to find the game and while Spud and Plympton started after the lynx he took the other direction in quest of a deer, knowing that whether or not he succeeded the hunt would relieve the tension under which his nerves had been strung for so many hours.

"'Tis a great bye he is," said Pat as he and Hal watched the well-knit figure disappear down the Hollow.

"You bet he is!" replied Hal heartily. "He's the cleanest, whitest fellow I know. You owe him a good deal, Pat, but I owe him more. When I first came to Woodcraft I'd lost the trail completely, and I guess I never would have found it if it hadn't been for Walt Upton. I hope he gets that deer."

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CHAPTER XVII

PAT GOES OUT

In the cold gray of breaking day Pat hit the back trail for Woodcraft Camp. All the boys turned out to see him off. He had had a good hot breakfast—Upton and Spud had seen to that. He was traveling light, which means that save for his drinking cup and enough erbswurst to make a couple of cups of soup, some crackers, a handful of raisins and his knife and matches he carried nothing.

"Don't you want your rifle?" asked Spud.

"For what?" demanded Pat. "The Injuns be all tame, the bears be afraid and 'tis no hunting trip."

Walter had given him a message to Dr. Merriam, which was as follows:

"*Smugglers' Hollow.*

"Dr. Merriam, Scout-master:

"I have the honor to report that the Lone Wolf Patrol found a man with a broken leg in Smugglers' Hollow and that he is now

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being cared for in their camp. The break is a simple fracture of the right femur, and has been set to the best of our ability. Corporal Malone will give you the details. While we think the bone has been properly set we also feel that it should be examined without delay by a physician. Provision must be made for caring for the victim where he now is or for getting him out where he can receive proper attention. A relief party will need extra rations.

"Awaiting your orders, I am,

"Respectfully yours,

"WALTER UPTON,

"*Leader Lone Wolf Patrol.*"

Gordon had not been told that Pat was going out for help, the boys rightly surmising that it would produce uneasiness which would not be conducive to the perfect quiet which he sorely needed.

To the young woodsman a forty mile hike presented no great difficulties, particularly as he carried no burden. The day promised to be fair and the ground was in good condition for walking. He swung away in the long rolling stride which all but Upton had found so hard to follow. To the uninitiated it is

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amazing how rapidly the woodsman's stride eats up distance, and Pat, young, long of leg and sound of wind, was just the one to show what it is capable of. He had planned to make the camp at Little Goose Pond in time for an early lunch and brief rest, and as he swung along he was in the best of spirits. To one less at home in the woods the trail might have seemed lonely, but not to Pat. His keen eyes took note of every little sign by the way, and there was not a mile of the trail on which he did not see or hear something of interest to denote the presence of furtive little wild folk.

As he approached Little Goose Pond he remembered the doe and fawns which had given him the chance to teach his comrades the lesson in sportsmanship and chuckled in pleasant thought of the way in which his fellow Scouts had accepted his rebuke. He wondered if he might catch another glimpse of the woodland mother and her babies, though he doubted it, because of the lateness of the hour. By this time they would most likely be on high land lying down. Nevertheless there was a chance that they might be at the pond, and as he

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drew near the little cove where they had been seen before he moved forward with the utmost care not to make a sound. He had reached the point in the trail overlooking the cove and was moving forward cautiously, crouching to take advantage of a screen of low growing brush, when he was startled by the crack of a rifle and almost in the same breath the high pitched whine of a bullet as his hat flew from his head. Fortunately he was quick witted enough to throw himself flat. He was not an instant too soon. Even as he fell came a second crack from the farther shore of the little cove and again the sickening whine of a missile tearing through the air at terrific speed. One who has never heard it cannot imagine the peculiarly ugly sound of a bullet passing close to the ear. Some writers speak of a bullet as whistling and others as singing. It neither whistles nor sings; it whines with a nasty ripping sound indescribably threatening and ugly.

Pat was on the point of yelling lustily when he thought better of it. He wanted to find out who had done the shooting and he knew that there would be small chance of that if he

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made it known that it was a man who had been shot at, for he did not for even a fleeting instant think that he had been shot at deliberately. He knew that beyond question he had been mistaken for a deer or other big game by a reckless or heedless hunter, and his Irish fighting blood boiled with the desire to lay hands on the shooter and teach him a lesson he never would forget.

"I got him!" shrilled an excited voice across the cove. "He never moved after my second shot. He's a big buck!"

"Are you sure of it?" asked a second voice, scarcely less excited.

"Of course I'm sure of it! I could only get a glimpse of him through the bushes, but he must be a buck and a big one to stand so high. Hurry up and let's get around there!" replied the first voice.

"A buck is ut!" growled Pat, clinching and opening his big fists. "A buck is ut! Shure ye will find ut the biggest buck ye iver laid eyes on!" He smiled grimly. He could hear the crashing of brush as the two hunters tore their way through, getting around the cove and presently the sound of labored breathing.

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"Did you mark the place where he fell?" panted the one who seemed to be in the rear.

"Sure I did! It was right up here the other side of these bushes. We'll find him in a minute!"

"Yez will foind him roight now!" roared Pat, springing to his feet, his blue eyes blazing as he confronted the speaker.

The latter went suddenly white, and a look of terror swept across his face at the sudden appearance of the red-headed young giant. He was hardly more than a stripling, a city boy by the cut of him, and his companion was not more than two years his senior. Both stood as if paralyzed while Pat strode forward and tore their rifles from their unresisting hands.

"I—I—did I hit you?" stammered the younger when he could find his tongue.

"By the grace av God, ye did not!" retorted Pat. "But 'tis no thanks to ye thot the bullet wint through me hat instead av me head. What was ye trying to do—commit murther?"

"I—I mistook you for a deer. You see——"

"Oi see," interrupted Pat. "There's noth-

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ing the matther wid me soight. 'Tis the loikes av such spalpeens as yersilf thot has nade av learning to see, and 'tis mesilf will be giving ye a lesson."

A big hand suddenly shot forward and gripped the surprised youngster by the collar. He was jerked from his feet and across Pat's knee where, despite his struggles, he was securely held by the young lumberman's left arm while his right rose and fell as he punctuated his remarks with resounding smacks from his open palm.

"'Tis the shpanking"—smack—"thot yer mither"—smack—"forgot to give ye"—smack—"when she let ye loose"—smack—"from her apron strings"—smack. "'Tis a remedy"—smack—"for poor soight"—smack—"thot may be afther"—smack—"helping ye to see better"—smack—"the nixt toime"—smack—"ye go shooting"—smack.

"You leave my brother alone!" The other lad now darted forward, white with rage, as if to throw himself on Pat. As he did so his eye fell on the rifles where Pat had dropped them. Instead of attacking Pat he plunged for these. But Pat was too quick for him.

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Dropping his blubbering victim he sprang forward and swung his big right fist just as the other got hold of one of the rifles. The blow landed fairly on the side of the head and the would-be assailant measured his length in the brush, all the fight knocked out of him.

Pat once more took possession of the rifles. His usual good nature was restored and he grinned at his victims as he plied them with questions.

"Where be yez from?" he demanded.

"New York," replied the elder sullenly.

"And where moight yer camp be?"

"The other end of the pond."

"And who moight be guiding two such innocent babes in the woods?"

"None of your business!" snarled the younger, down whose cheeks the tears were still running. Truth to tell, they were tears of mortification rather than from the pain of his chastisement, for Pat had hurt him more in pride than otherwise, which was quite as he had intended.

Pat took a threatening step forward. "Bill Simpson!" the elder muttered hastily.

"And where may he be now?"

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"We left him at camp," was the grudging reply.

"It's a nurse-maid and not a guide thot yez be nading, and Bill Simpson ought to be in better business," said Pat. "Oi think Oi'll be turning his charges over to him, for Oi'm in something av a hurry. The two av yez trot along the trail ahead av me now."

He shouldered the rifles and picked up his hat. The younger lad shuddered slightly as he saw the bullet hole in the top of the crown. Pat noticed it.

"'Twas a good shot, me bye, and when ye have learned never to shoot till ye know what ye be shooting at ye will be getting thot big buck ye was afther being so anxious for," he said kindly. Then, as the two lads marched ahead of him, he discoursed fluently and emphatically on the danger of pointing a gun until the object is clearly in sight and there can be no possibility of a mistake.

It was in this order that they reached the lean-to. A grizzled guide was stooping over the fire preparing lunch. His look of blank amazement when he first caught sight of the

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little procession was funny to see. Pat's eyes twinkled appreciatively.

"Hello, Bill!" said he. "Oi've brought the babes home. Shure Oi thought ye were ould enough, Bill, to know better than to be laving dangerous weapons where the infants could get their hands on thim! Ye better put these where they will be afther doing no harm to honest men. Oi was timpted to throw thim in the pond, but they be too foine to lave rusting and no good to any wan."

At this point both boys began to talk at once, giving Bill orders in no gentle tone, and the gist of these was that he should forthwith and without delay thrash Pat within an inch of his life. Bill's perplexity increased.

"For the love of the saints, Pat, what does it all mean?" he exclaimed.

"Ut manes thot this young gintlemin here thought he had got a buck and instead he got the shpanking he should have had long ago," replied Pat grinning broadly. "But," he added, his face sobering, "he came nearer to getting me than Oi like to think about." He held out his hat, pointing to the bullet hole.

Simpson didn't need to be told to know

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what had happened. His face flushed an angry red as he turned to the two boys. "So that's what you were shooting at down at the end of the pond!" he exclaimed. "If Pat hadn't licked you I would, and I've a great mind to as it is. What did I tell you about making sure of what you were shooting at before you laid a finger on the trigger? We only just got in here this morning, and these youngsters were crazy to go look for a deer," he explained, turning to Pat, "so while I was making camp I let 'em go down to the end of the pond. I gave 'em fair warning before they started, but I wouldn't have let them go at all if I had dreamed that they could get into trouble. I didn't suppose there was any one within ten miles of here. They're a couple of young upstarts with more money than brains." (Bill was a plain speaker when aroused.) "I had misgivings when I agreed to take them in for a week, but the color of their father's coin was good, and I thought it would be safe enough way off here."

He turned once more to his crestfallen charges. "This trip ends right here!" he declared. "We hike out of here to-morrow and

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you can get some other guide to take you in if you can find one. I don't want to be taken out a corpse myself and no more do I want to be charged with being a party to manslaughter. We'll hit the trail out the first thing to-morrow morning."

"Aisy, Bill, aisy! Kape yer shirt on," said Pat. "The byes have had their lesson, and 'tis wan they be not loike to forget in a hurry. Ye will have nothing more av this kind to worry about, if Oi know anything about ut. They have no more loiking for killing a man than ye have, Bill, and the mimory av me ould hat wid the hole in ut is going to kape thim from such loike carelessness in the future. Forget ut, Bill, and give the lads a few lessons in the ways av the woods and teach thim how to look out for others as well as for thimselves."

"Well, I'll see about it," growled Bill. "They've ordered me around like a dog, and I've taken it because that is what I hired out to do, but if they want to stay in they'll take orders from me now. What are you doing up here, Pat?"

"On me way out from Shmugglers' Hollow,

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and by thot same token 'tis wasting toime thot Oi be. Oi have to be at Woodcraft Camp the noight, and 'tis a good twinty miles yet. Oi'll warm up a bit av soup at yer fire and be on me way."

The discomfited young hunters had withdrawn to the lean-to while Pat heated his soup and chatted with Simpson. They were both ashamed and frightened at the thought of their carelessness and what it had so nearly resulted in, but for the time being mortification and resentment at the treatment they had received were uppermost, for they were of that unfortunate class of spoiled youths whose every whim has been gratified. They looked up quickly at Bill's sudden hail of "Hello, sheriff! Looking for game hogs? Nothing doing here, for we've just come in."

A big man, whose approach they had not seen, had joined the two by the fire and was shaking hands. It was the deputy who had visited Plympton at the cabin in Smugglers' Hollow.

"Hello, Pat!" he exclaimed. "Thought you were over in Canada by this time hunting Lost Trail. What are you doing here?

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Given it up? Where are the rest of the boys?"

"Back in the Hollow," replied Pat, answering the last question first. "Had a message one av the byes wanted to get out to Woodcraft and so Oi'm taking ut for him. Did ye get yer man?"

The sheriff shook his head. "No," said he. "Have just come from the camps to the west and they haven't seen hair nor hide of him. Guess he's lit out of this country. Hasn't shown up in the Hollow, has he?"

This was the question Pat had been dreading, but his Irish wit was equal to the emergency. Unnoticed he pushed the end of the stick on which one edge of his cup of pea soup rested over the fire with the immediate result that it capsized and in the momentary confusion and laughter at his expense which followed the question was forgotten. It was then that the elder of the two boys slipped out of the lean-to and getting the sheriff's eye beckoned to him.

"Are you the sheriff?" he asked.

"I'm a deputy sheriff, sonny. Why?"

"Well, I want you to arrest that fellow,"

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was the prompt reply of the boy as he pointed to Pat.

"Arrest him! What for?" exclaimed the astonished sheriff.

"Assault and battery. Do you see that bruise on the side of my face? He did it. And he beat my brother something awful. He's a bully and a blackguard and I want him arrested."

The sheriff's face was a study as he turned to Pat.

"What's this I hear?" he demanded. "I thought you'd gotten all over being a bully, Pat. Why don't you take some one your own size?"

Pat grinned at the mock severity in the sheriff's tone and once more told the story and showed the bullet hole in the hat. The elder man's face grew grave and stern. He called the two boys over to the fire and there for the third time they were told of the seriousness of their offense and in no uncertain terms, until they actually began to feel that Pat had let them off lightly.

Pat, meanwhile, was anxious to get away before the sheriff should ask any more embar-

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rassing questions, and at the first opportunity prepared to start.

"If that message isn't important I'll take it out for you to-morrow, Pat. I'm going out that way," offered the sheriff.

"Much obliged," replied Pat, "but Oi promised to get ut out to-noight. Besides, Oi want to get more supplies."

"Well, good luck to you. I'd go along with you, but I'm getting a bit footsore on this wild goose chase, so I think I'll stay here to-night and come in in the morning," returned the sheriff, and Pat gave a sigh of relief, for this was the thing he had most feared.

"A fine lad," remarked Simpson as they watched Pat swing up the trail.

"He has the making of the best woodsman in the North Woods," declared the sheriff emphatically. "He's a wonder when you think of the swearing overgrown young bully he was a few years back. You can laugh all you please at this Boy Scout movement, but if it does for many what it's done for Pat it's the biggest thing in the world. And to think the boy was within an inch of losing his life this very day!"

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Pat wasted no time on the trail. He had been delayed longer than he had realized and it would take some tall hiking to make the lumber road before the shadows made it difficult to see the blazed trees. So he pushed on at double quick and just as he was beginning to experience difficulty, for the forest was dense and darkness came early at that point, he struck the road and knew that from there on he could take it easy. With ten miles to go he regarded his long hike as practically ended. At nine o'clock he was eating a hot supper at Woodcraft Camp, while between bites he told his story to Dr. Merriam.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE SUNSHINE-MAKER

After Pat's departure the Lone Wolves busied themselves policing camp and skinning and cutting up the deer that Walter had brought in the night before, for his hunt had been successful. It was not so big as Spud's, being a spike-horn, but it was in prime condition. Butchering was new to all of them save as they had helped Pat with Spud's deer, but they made a very creditable job of it, all things considered. With this out of the way they turned their attention to cutting more balsam for the extra beds that would be required when the relief party arrived.

"Where we going to put 'em?" growled Spud as with his arms full of browse he stood in the cabin doorway. "Strikes me we are about full now."

Gordon turned his head and looked sharply at Spud, and an uneasy look crept into his eyes.

"I hadn't thought of that!" exclaimed

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Upton. "We shall be crowded and then some with just the Big Chief, and if there are two or three we'll have to sleep packed in like sardines. What's the matter with building a lean-to for some of us to sleep in?"

"The very thing! Wonder we didn't think of it before," cried Hal. "When we get that done we can do some more exploring. If Spud is willing I'm going to take his rifle this afternoon and see if I can't find some grouse. I have a hunch one would taste pretty good to Gordon about now. How about it?" He turned to the injured man with a smile and the latter did his best to smile back as he replied, "It would that." Had Hal been a little more observing he would have noticed that the smile was very much forced.

The lean-to was completed before noon and after mess the boys scattered. Spud insisted that he was going to remain as nurse and camp guard. Hal started off in quest of grouse and Walter and Plympton headed for the north side of the Hollow bent on making a more thorough examination than had hitherto been made. Spud watched them out of sight and then sought the cabin to see if he

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could do anything for his patient. Also he had in mind the closing of a deal for that lynx skin. He still considered that it belonged to the crippled trapper. The fact that the latter would never have gotten it but for Spud didn't alter the situation in the boy's mind. As he entered the cabin whistling a cheerful tune Gordon turned his head and Spud saw at once by the return of the harassed hunted look in the eyes that something had occurred to distress him. In a flash he recalled the remarks made when the need of a lean-to was discussed that morning. The trapper knew now that some one else was expected and a great fear was upon him.

"Say, boy, are we alone?" he asked huskily.

"Yep!" replied Spud cheerily. "Nobody here but you and me. I'm chief nurse, head cook, sunshine-maker, captain of the guard and chore boy for the afternoon. Anything I can do for you? I'll tell you a story, sing a song, dance a jig or do anything else you want." He grinned down at the invalid.

"Where's that big Irish fellow that helped set my leg?" questioned the latter.

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Spud winced at the question, but was too honest to evade it. Besides, Gordon already knew enough to have his suspicions fully aroused.

"Gone out for help," he replied promptly.

"Who's he gone for?" There was no hiding the anxiety in the voice.

"For Dr. Merriam of Woodcraft Camp. Know him?"

Gordon shook his head. "I don't need a doctor. You fellows have fixed me up all right. Is he the only one you sent for?" he growled.

"Sure! Who else would we be sending for?" replied Spud lightly, and noted the look of relief that shot across the man's face. "We hope we've set the leg right, but it ought to be seen by a physician. If there is anything wrong with it you might be a cripple for life. So we've sent for Dr. Merriam, who is the head of the boys' camp where we have been spending the summer and is one of the finest men in the world. He'll know in a jiffy if everything is all right, and if it isn't he'll make it right. You'll like the 'Big Chief'—that's what we call him—you can't help it."

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"Who found me?" was the next question.

"I did, and that reminds me: What will you take for that lynx?" replied Spud, anxious to change the subject.

Gordon looked puzzled. "What lynx?" he asked.

Spud laughed. "I forgot you didn't know anything about that," he replied. Then he launched into the story of his adventure and how it led up to the finding of the crippled trapper. The story lost nothing in the retelling and Gordon smiled in spite of himself as Spud graphically described his feelings when the lynx leaped at him and afterward when he was trying to get his rifle.

"Now what will you take for him?" concluded Spud.

"Nothin'," replied Gordon promptly. "He's yours. Do you suppose I'd take money for him after what you've done for me? I may be pretty rough and tough, and I've done some pretty mean things in my life, but no one can ever say that Alec Smith is small enough to do such a thing as that."

Spud made no sign that he had noticed this slip in regard to the name, and the young

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trapper hurried on in some confusion as if he realized that he had made a blunder. "The old brute had been robbing my snares for a week, and so I set a trap right under that one and left a rabbit hanging in it. That was two days before you found him. It was that very afternoon that I got hurt. Slipped off a ledge coming down the mountain just back of my camp. Lucky for me that it was only a few hundred yards away. Took me most of the afternoon to crawl there, and I guess I fainted several times on the way from the pain of dragging that broken leg. Don't remember much about it except the awful pain. Say, boy, was I foolish when you found me?" The note of anxiety once more crept into his voice.

"Oh, you were a little bit dippy—kind of off in your head. Kept muttering a lot of lingo, Scotch, I guess, and I'm not much on dialect," replied Spud lightly. "Besides, I had too much to think about to listen to what a loony man was saying. What do you think of the Lone Wolves, anyway?"

"I dinna ken what you mean. I hae seen no wolves in Smugglers' Hollow," was the

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puzzled reply with the first lapse into the Scotch dialect since he had begun to talk.

Spud laughed, an infectious laugh that brought a half smile from the invalid. "I'm one of them," he explained. "You see, we fellows are a patrol of Boy Scouts, and every patrol has a name. Ours is the Lone Wolf Patrol, and that fellow we call Walter, the one who bossed the setting of your leg, you know, is the leader."

"And what are Boy Scouts? I dinna remember hearing tell of them. You see, I've lived all my life in the woods, mostly in Ca—lumber camps, I mean, and there's no Boy Scouts there. Tell me about them."

Spud did not show that he had noticed this second slip. It was clear that the man had started to say that he had spent most of his life in Canada, but had caught himself just in time. Instead the boy plunged into a full account of the Boy Scout organization and explained its purpose. He repeated the Scout oath and then the Scout law. He told how a Scout regards his honor as the most precious thing he possesses, and how it is to be absolutely trusted at all times and in all places,

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and how a Scout's given word is as binding as an oath. He explained how the Scout must try to do something for some one else every day, and that in caring for him the Lone Wolves were simply doing their duty as Scouts quite aside from obeying the natural impulses of their hearts.

When Spud once warmed up to a subject he was a good talker, and on the subject of Scouting he could, as he said, talk all day. He told what it had done for Pat Malone, a rough young backwoods tough, and what it had done for Hal Harrison, the pampered and spoiled son of a multi-millionaire. He explained how it recognizes no social class or caste, but is founded on democracy—the absolute equality of every man and boy—and he wound up by telling of some of the great feats that have been accomplished by Boy Scouts. "There," he concluded, "it's a wonder if I haven't talked you deaf, dumb and blind. I'm going out now to make you a cup of soup."

The invalid drank it in silence and Spud, thinking that he must be tired and might sleep if left alone, busied himself outside the

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cabin. Occasionally he peeped in to see that all was well. Gordon, or Smith, as Spud now knew his real name was, lay as he had left him, his eyes closed and apparently asleep. In reality he was doing some of the hardest thinking he had ever done in his life. As the afternoon waned and the time for the others to return drew near he became uneasy and as Spud looked in to see how he was he spoke.

"Come here, boy; I want to talk to you."

"Fire away," grinned Spud. "I'm a good listener when I can stop my tongue long enough."

But the other did not respond to Spud's light mood. He cleared his throat as if to speak, hesitated, and then suddenly blurted out:

"You fellows have treated me mighty white, and though you don't know it I'm just a low-down, mean skunk. I—I'm the one that stole some of your grub back by the pond."

"Sure," replied Spud. "That's no news to me."

"What!" exclaimed the other. "How long have you known it?"

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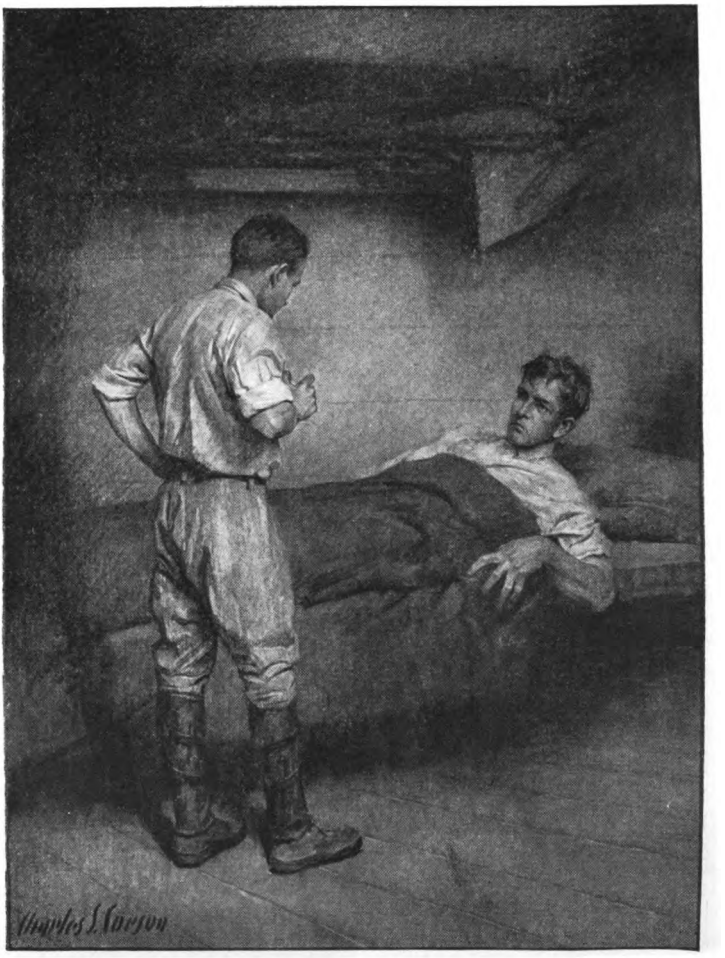

"DO THE OTHER FELLOWS KNOW?"

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"I've known it all along—ever since I found you in your camp," said Spud quietly.

His companion's face was a study. "Do—do you mind telling how you knew? You didn't see me, for I made sure that you were asleep that day. Did I give myself away in my loony talk?"

"Nope!" Spud's speech was to the point if not elegant. "Found your footprints where you came around Little Goose Pond and one of 'em showed that you were wearing a patched moccasin. When I found you in your camp I stumbled over one of your moccasins and saw it was patched. Then I knew. You know I told you Scouts are trained to observe little things."

"Do—do the other fellows know?" The question was almost a whisper.

"Don't know," replied Spud. "They may suspect, but they haven't said anything about it. I kicked the old moccasin out of sight and I guess in the excitement they have forgotten all about that lost stuff. Besides, you were traced away back on the trail out and it was taken for granted that you had dug out. That reminds me, how in the deuce did you

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get back here, and what were you doing way off there, anyway?"

"I circled round after leaving your camp. It was no trick for me, because I know these woods pretty well."

"But what were you doing off there and what made you steal?" persisted Spud. "If you wanted grub why didn't you come in and ask for it?"

"I dinna think you would give it to the likes of me," replied Smith evasively. "I dinna intend to steal, but when I saw that bacon handy-like it was too much for me, for I hae na had a bite o' onything but fresh meat and I could no' resist. And to think that you should treat me like this, knowing that I was a thief!"

Spud looked at his companion, and then on a sudden impulse resolved on a bold stroke.

"A deputy sheriff was in here looking for some one the other day," he remarked in a casual way.

The other gave a visible start, and the fright in his eyes was pitiful to see.

"Wha—what was he doing—looking for poachers?" he asked, trying desperately to

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make his inquiry sound as casual as Spud's remark.

"No," replied Spud gazing fixedly out of the doorway, "he was looking for a fellow wanted for murder in Canada." He heard the other catch his breath and gulp once or twice, but did not look at him. "Seemed to think that he might be hiding here in the Hollow," he hurried on. "Left here to have a look in the lumber camps to the west. Do you know, I'm sorry for that poor chap. Of course if he's guilty he ought to be caught and punished. But if he isn't guilty and is just afraid, why, I —I'd like to help him somehow."

A painful silence followed, broken at last by the stifled voice of the man in the bunk. "Boy," he gasped, "what more do you know?"

Spud turned to him and spoke frankly, and with wonderful gentleness. "Smith—you've already admitted that that is your name and not Gordon—I don't know anything," said he, "but I can guess a whole lot. You are the man that's wanted. The description left by the sheriff fits you exactly, including the missing finger. You were hiding out here without supplies, and that is why you stole from us,

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and why you were snaring rabbits. When I found your camp and called to you, you were in a terrible fright, although out of your head, and kept saying over and over, 'I dinna do it! I dinna do it!'"

He was interrupted by a half sob. "As God lives, it's true! I dinna do it! I dinna! Don't give me up, boy! Don't give me up!"

Spud turned away his head that he might not see the other in his moment of weakness and blew his nose violently.

"Look here, Smith," said he. "I don't believe you did. None of the other fellows believes you did, and that's why we didn't send out for the sheriff at the same time we sent for the doctor. We couldn't decide in our own minds just what is the right thing to do. You're helpless and will be for some weeks. The sheriff is likely to look in here again any day. If you are innocent there's nothing to be afraid of. We want to help you. We've tried to show you that. We are Scouts, all of us, and I've tried to show you that Scouts are to be trusted and that they are in honor bound to try to help those who need help. If you are innocent, as you say you are and as we

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honestly believe you are, why not tell us the whole story? You're in trouble, the worst kind of trouble, and we want to help you. You believe that, don't you?"

Smith nodded. "Then tell me the whole business," continued Spud. "Perhaps when we know it all we can see what is best to do to help you out. No innocent man ever yet suffered from the truth. All the fellows feel just as I do about it."

For a little while the man in the bunk made no reply. Then abruptly he began to talk. Once his tongue was loosed he seemed to find relief in pouring out his story. He talked rapidly, and as Spud listened he realized fully for the first time what the blessing of a good home is. It was such a tale as Spud had read in books of fiction, but had found difficult to believe as true to real life. It was hard to believe now that what he heard was true, but he had only to glance at the crippled form before him and note the earnestness in the low voice of the speaker to know that he was listening to a chapter in the struggle of a human soul against overwhelming odds, and his heart swelled with sympathy.

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The story had just come to an end when the howl of a wolf, or what was meant for such, floated in from a little way down the Hollow. Spud reached across and gripped a hand of the trapper. "I'm glad you've told me this," he said hurriedly. "It's going to make things easier for us, and I guess it's a good thing for you to have it off your mind. The other fellows are coming now, and I'm going to tell them this evening if you are willing."

Smith nodded. "Do just as you think best," said he.

"All right," replied Spud. "It is best that they should know. You can trust them just as you can trust me, for we're all Scouts, you know, and some of them are better Scouts than I am. Now I'm going out to see about supper. I'd clean forgotten that I am supposed to be the cook."

Hal had fallen in with the others shortly before reaching camp and the three were just coming up the trail as Spud came out of the cabin. Hal had a brace of grouse which he waved as Spud appeared.

"Here's something for the invalid!" he shouted. Then noting the sober look on

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Spud's usually merry face he added, "How is he?"

"Doing fine," replied Spud.

"Thought he must be worse by the looks of you," retorted Hal.

"Nope!" replied Spud. "He's better. He's got a load off his mind. Tell you about it after supper. He'll be better still when he gets one of those birds in his stomach. Come on, Sister, and get busy. You're assistant cook."

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CHAPTER XIX

ALEC SMITH'S STORY

"It's he," said Spud with a significant nod toward the cabin as the four boys gathered around the evening fire.

"You mean he's the man the sheriff wants?" asked Hal eagerly. "Has he confessed?"

Spud nodded. "He's confessed that he's the man the sheriff is looking for, but not the man who is guilty of the crime. I suppose you fellows guessed that he's the one who stole our supplies at Little Goose."

"Hadn't thought anything about it; too many other things to think about," replied Hal.

"I've known it ever since we found him," said Spud, a wee bit vaingloriously.

"Oh, go on, Spud! What are you trying to give us? You mean you suspected it," said Walter.

"No such thing! I knew it!" retorted

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Spud with some heat. "Found a moccasin with a patch that corresponded to those prints we found. Hid the moccasin and didn't say anything to you fellows because I felt so darned sorry for the poor chap that I didn't want you fellows to think any worse of him than you had to. This afternoon he told me the whole story, and agreed that I should tell you because it will help us to know what is right and best to do. And I tell you right now, fellows, I'm a thousand times more sorry for him now than I was before, even if he did steal from us." Spud was tremendously in earnest.

"In the first place his name isn't Gordon; it's Smith—Alec Smith. He was born in a log cabin somewhere up in the Canadian woods, I forget just where, and was one of a big family. He's of Scotch descent, and his father was a trapper and lumber-jack. Alec didn't say much about him, but I judge that he was a worthless sort of citizen. Anyway he was killed when Alec was about eight years old—crushed to death breaking a log-jam. I guess things were bad enough before, but they were worse after that. They lived on what

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they could raise in their little clearing and what the oldest boys could shoot and trap. Of course all the kids had to get to work as soon as they were big enough to earn anything. When he was twelve Alec was chore boy in a lumber camp, same as Pat used to be. His mother had some education and taught him to read and write, but he never saw the inside of a school.

"I guess there isn't any life much rougher and tougher than that of a lumber camp, and that's the life Alec grew up in. It was a case of fight his way with his fists, and the test of a man was to drink the most and lick his weight in wildcats, as the saying is in the woods. Winters when he wasn't lumbering he trapped, and being pretty close to the border he ran his lines both sides, so that this country around here is as familiar to him as the country on his own side. Like most of his class his greatest ambition was to be known as the king bully of the camps, and I guess from what he says that sometimes he was a pretty ugly customer. You know how those fellows fight—kick, gouge, bite and spike a man when he's down. That's the way Alec

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lost his finger—bitten off in a fight. Ugh! Doesn't it make you sick to think of it? Anyway, he got a bad name, and of course he made a lot of enemies. One of these was a French half-breed called Black Charley, one of the treacherous, sneaky kind, who would stop at nothing, and if he thought he could get away with it would just as soon knife a man in the back as not.

"Alec had licked this fellow once in a fair fight and the skunk had sworn revenge. One winter all his traps were stolen, and though he didn't have any proof he knew well enough that Black Charley had stolen 'em. One Saturday night about a month ago in the camp where Alec was at work there was a grand spree, which as usual ended in a free-for-all fight. There was a lot of bad blood between some of the men. Black Charley was one of the gang, and it so happens that there was a big Irishman, known as 'The Mick,' whom the half-breed hated as much as he did Alec. Also it happens that Alec and 'The Mick' had an old score unsettled.

"Alec says he doesn't remember much of the details of that fight, only that for a while

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the camp was in an uproar, and it was every man for himself. Just when things were at their worst some one yelled that 'The Mick' had been stabbed. Sure enough the big Irishman was dead, a knife between his ribs, and the knife was Alec's. Alec swears that he didn't do the stabbing. In the first place he never has used a knife in a fight, always fighting fair according to the woodsman's code, and in the second place he wasn't near 'The Mick' during the whole scrap.

"Some of his friends bore him out in this statement, but the evidence was against him, the knife being recognized as his. The friends of the dead man began to talk of a lynching, and Alec's friends hustled him out of camp with nothing but his rifle and a few provisions, and he beat it across the line. Of course this made it look all the blacker for him. He knew well enough that the authorities would issue a warrant for his arrest and probably offer a reward, so he kept in hiding. Hadn't spoken to a soul up to the time we found him.

"His theory is that Black Charley stole his knife and then, watching his chance, got the Irishman and left the knife sticking in him,

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knowing that the thing would turn out just as it did and thinking in that way to get both men at one lick. Like most of these ignorant rough-and-ready fellows Alec has a mortal fear of being caught in the toils of the law. He knows this country like a book, and he figured that Smugglers' Hollow was about the safest place he could find, until the hunting season opened, anyway. He lived in the cabin here for a week and then built that lean-to where we found him. Felt safer there, especially as it got near time for the hunting season to open. Of course his provisions didn't last him long, but it was easy enough to get meat, and that and berries were what he lived on mostly. He had some traps cached over in the Hollow here, and that's how he happened to set that one for the lynx which had been robbing his snares.

"The day he robbed us he was scouting round to see if the hunters were working in this way. He saw Hal and Sister fishing and then sneaked around to have a look at the camp and see whom we had for guide. I was taking a snooze, as you know, and the sight of that bacon was too much for him. Says he

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just couldn't take his eyes off it. Knew he was running a risk, but felt that he just had to take the chance. Says he never tasted anything so good in his life as those crackers and raisins. Left the trail just beyond where Pat found the cracker crumbs and circled round and hit the trail back to the Hollow somewhere beyond the pond, taking care not to step in any soft places. Spent that night in the cabin here. You remember Pat said there was the smell of smoke in the fireplace. It was the morning of the second day we were in the Hollow that he met with the accident. The rest we all know."

Silence followed the conclusion of Spud's story. This simple, bare statement of facts presented in peculiarly vivid form the tragedy of a wrecked life. There were no picturesque incidents to relieve it of its grimness. Walter was the first to speak.

"It seems to me," said he, picking his words slowly, "it's sort of another case of a lost trail. He just got started wrong in the first place, and then floundered about until he wouldn't have known the trail to decent manhood if he'd found it. Of course we don't

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know any more about him than what Spud has told us, but he doesn't seem like a bad sort. I—I—if we could do something to help him get started right it would be a bigger and better thing than finding a dozen lost Indian trails. Gee, it must be something fierce to be hiding in fear of your life all the time and feeling that every man's hand is against you!"

"Don't you suppose his friends are working for him up in Canada?" asked Plympton.

"Probably," replied Spud, "but he doesn't know. He hasn't dared let them know where he is. Besides, probably they haven't much influence anyway."

"The fact that he has a bad record as a fighter and that there was bad feeling between him and the dead man would be against him," commented Hal thoughtfully. "I certainly would hate to give myself up if I were in his place, and yet it is the right thing to do. I don't know if it's the best thing. I don't suppose he's got a dollar to fight the case with. Say!" his face suddenly lighting up, "I'll bet Dad will put up the money if I write or tell him about it and can convince him that

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Alec is really innocent. He's awfully tender hearted, even if he is rich. He's helped a lot of poor fellows that nobody knows of and—and—well, he'll do most anything for me." Hal grinned a bit sheepishly at this confession of indulgence on the part of his father.

"It would be great if he would!" exclaimed Spud. "Then Alec would stand some show."

"We'd better not say anything about it," cautioned Upton. "You know Mr. Harrison might not see it as we do, and whatever we do we don't want to raise any false hopes. I guess we all feel that Alec has told a straight story, but I don't see as we can do anything till Dr. Merriam arrives, only make Alec as comfortable as we can and show him that we are his friends. I'm glad we decided not to notify the sheriff yet, and I hope to goodness that he doesn't take it into his head to come prowling round here again until after the 'Big Chief' gets here. I guess it's time to turn in, fellows."

During the next day the boys strove in little unobtrusive ways to show the helpless trapper their sympathy and kindly feeling. It was clear that it was a relief to him to have freed

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his mind of its burdensome secret, and he talked freely of hunting, trapping and like matters. The boys on their part were careful to ask no embarrassing questions, and never referred directly or indirectly to the cause of his predicament. As Plympton said, it was bad enough to be in such a fix without being reminded of it. Spud had established himself as head nurse. He seemed to feel a sort of proprietary right by virtue of having found the injured man. For that matter the latter seemed most content when Spud was near, and by common consent the cook was relieved of other duties to devote himself to his self-imposed task as sunshine-maker. In this he was signally successful, and more than once drew a laugh from his charge by his droll speeches and antics. The others devoted the day to further exploration, and while they were away Spud told his patient the story of "Lost Trail" and how they had hoped to re-establish it. He did not, however, give any inkling of the fact that they had virtually given up all hope of going further because of the complication caused by the finding of Smith.

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It was about noon of the next day that a long drawn howl sounded from the direction of the trail from Little Goose Pond.

"It's Pat!" shouted Hal, who happened to be outside the cabin. "I wonder who's with him!"

He did not have to wonder long, for shortly three familiar figures appeared on the trail. They were Pat, Dr. Merriam and "Big Jim" Everly, head guide at Woodcraft Camp. All three bore heavy packs of supplies. They had started at noon the day previous and spent the night at Little Goose Pond. The doctor returned the salute of the four boys as he strode up, and then swung his heavy pack to the ground.

"Well, Mr. Leader, what is the report from the patient?" he demanded with one of the rare smiles which did much to endear him to his boys.

"Doing finely, sir," replied Upton. "That is," he added, "he's doing all right so far as we can tell. That leg worries us, because, you know, we are not sure that it has been properly set."

"We'll soon see about that," replied the

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doctor briskly. "I'll make an examination at once. You'd better go in with me, Upton, and the rest of you wait out here."

"Begging your pardon, sir, the patient seems to feel better when Spud—I mean Ely —is with him, and perhaps it would be best for him to go in in my place," replied Upton.

"Just as you say, Mr. Leader," replied the doctor, and followed by Spud he entered the cabin.

Five minutes later the two reappeared, and the waiting boys knew by the expression of the two faces that all was well. The doctor extended his hand to Upton for the Scout grip. "That was a splendid piece of work, Upton," said he heartily. "I want to congratulate you and your patrol on the way in which you met this emergency. The bone is perfectly set, and has already begun to knit. I couldn't have done it better myself. I'm proud of the Lone Wolves, all of them, and I want to shake hands with each one."

The boys flushed with pleasure as to each in turn he gave the Scout grip. "Now," said he, "I'm hungry as a bear, and I know Jim and Pat are in the same condition. How

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about a steak from that venison I see you've got hanging there? Afterward we'll call a council and see if we can come to some decision as to what it is best to do."

When the meal was out of the way the entire party gathered in council beyond earshot of the cabin. Of course the doctor was conversant with all the facts relating to the finding of the injured man, for Pat had given him these in detail. These Spud supplemented by retelling the story of Smith's life. The doctor's face grew grave as he listened.

"This is more serious than I had hoped it would prove," said he when Spud had finished. "Of course we have only Smith's word for it, and we must not act hastily. What is it, Jim?" The latter had half risen as if to speak.

"Just this for what it is worth, Doctor," replied Jim. "There was an Alec Smith in a lumber camp where I was working two winters ago, a young feller, pretty rough and tough, but I never knew him to tell a lie. If this happens to be the same one I'll believe any story he tells. I'll take a look at him when we get through here. If it's the same one he'll know me."

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"Good!" said the doctor. "Now, Upton, what are your plans?"

"We haven't made any," replied Upton, "except that we've about given up any idea of finishing this trip. It seems to us that our duty is here until some arrangement is made for taking care of Smith, and we've been waiting for you to get here before trying to decide definitely on anything. It is so late now that I guess there would be small chance of finding Lost Trail anyway, particularly as we haven't been able to find anything like a promising lead out of the Hollow, although we've spent all our spare time searching for it. Of course we should like to at least deliver that message, but even that doesn't look possible now."

"I don't know why not," said the doctor. "I've thought of all this, and your willingness to give up your trip does you all credit. But I see no need of it; that is, not for all of you to give it up. Jim here has come in prepared to stay a couple of weeks, and if one of you will volunteer to stay with him a week ——"

All five of the Lone Wolves were on their feet before he could complete his sentence,

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each eager to offer his services. But Spud was a fraction the quickest.

"Me! I'm it!" he fairly bellowed. And as a general laugh followed at his vehemence he added, "He's mine, anyway. I found him. Besides, my school doesn't open until the first of October, and you other fellows have got to be back by the fifteenth of this month. I ought to be the one to stay anyway, even if I didn't want to, which I do, because I horned into this party in the first place. You fellows don't need a sunshine-maker, and he does," he concluded with a grin and a nod toward the cabin.

"Ely's grounds seem unshakable," laughed the doctor. "I don't see, Mr. Leader, as there is anything to do but confer on him the honor of the sacrifice. I must return to Woodcraft day after to-morrow, and there will consider the next move. Jim and Ely will be entirely comfortable here, and in the meantime the rest of you can complete your hike. Pat, if he is so minded, can return directly here. It will be the shortest way home for him, anyway. I am glad that the sheriff was not notified. I shall take that upon myself

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when I have thoroughly examined into the case. He is not likely to come this way again very soon, as he has already started in another direction to look into some reports of game hogs who have been killing more deer than the law allows. Now I am going in to have a talk with Smith, so I'll leave you to reform your plans."

"I knew things would be straightened out when the 'Big Chief' got here," said Hal with a sigh of relief as the doctor disappeared in the cabin. "Hello, Pat! Who took your hat for a target?" He had caught sight of the bullet hole.

It was characteristic of Pat that he had said nothing of his adventure with the reckless young sportsmen at Little Goose Pond, not even to Dr. Merriam, and it is probable that the latter would never have known of it but for the arrival of the sheriff at Woodcraft the morning after Pat's long hike. Now at Hal's question he tried to turn it off with his usual banter. But the boys kept at him until little by little they wormed the story from him.

"Phew!" exclaimed Hal with a long drawn whistle, "But that was a close call! And to

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think that I might have been just that kind of a chap if it hadn't been for Woodcraft Camp and the fellows there who showed me what a contemptible little chump I was. Gee, but I'd have liked to have been there and seen you give him that spanking, Pat!"

Pat chuckled. "Shall Oi show ye how ut was done?" he asked.

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CHAPTER XX

THE END OF LOST TRAIL

EARLY in the morning of the second day after the arrival of Dr. Merriam and Big Jim the Lone Wolf Patrol was once more in marching order, but this time one short in number, for Spud was to remain. It had been decided to push straight north, unless en route they stumbled upon some information which might lead them to Lost Trail.

Pat was to leave his rifle for Big Jim. The carrying of a rifle across the international boundary probably would result in complications. Moreover, it would not be needed. Big Jim had spent the previous day "jerking" venison for them. Not that they needed it, for with the supplies which had been brought in they were in no danger of going hungry, but "jerked" meat is always the standby of explorers, and when Plympton chanced to remark on this and wondered what it tasted like the big guide at once got busy. The

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meat was cut in thin strips, salted and allowed to stand for about two hours, and then dried and smoked over a small fire of black birch. When done it was dry as a chip, but would keep indefinitely, and retained all its flavor and nutriment. The smoke from the black birch added a peculiarly pleasant flavor.

The boys had each in turn shaken hands with Smith and wished him a rapid recovery. He had tried brokenly to express to them his appreciation of what they had done for him. Now the little patrol was drawn up before the cabin for a final salute to the "Big Chief" who was himself going out that afternoon. Spud, who ever since he got up that morning had appeared to be laboring under suppressed excitement, joined the group and walking up to Upton gravely saluted.

"Mr. Leader," said he, "I have the honor to report that there is a trail out of Smugglers' Hollow which the Lone Wolves have not found, and which they would not find but for the information which Alec Smith has given me for your use. He doesn't know whether or not it is Lost Trail, but he does know that it is the shortest and most direct trail into

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Canada. He has heard rumors that it was used by Indians long ago. It is the trail by which he came here in his flight after the scrap in the lumber camp. He discovered it while trapping some three years ago and says he doubts if there are half a dozen people living who know of it. He thinks it probable that it was much used once, but was abandoned and then with the establishment of other trails was forgotten. And he's got a mighty interesting theory as to why it was abandoned. He thinks that the beavers closed the trail where it enters the Hollow. He says it comes in over a pretty steep ridge and thinks it originally crossed the brook at the foot and then swung down the Hollow. When the beavers dammed the brook and made their big pond there was no way of getting around except along that north shore, which is so steep that it is mighty tough going. So gradually the trail fell into disuse and finally was abandoned altogether, easier trails having been opened. That's his theory, and he'd like to know what you think about it if you take this trail out.

"Now here are his directions for finding

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this end of it: Go up to the big dam. Cross this and work along the north bank of the pond. You'll find it mighty tough going, but you can make it all right. About a hundred yards this side of the second dam is a regular old giant of a hemlock close to the edge of the pond. Just beyond this is a little wash or gully coming straight down from the top of the ridge. It's so hidden by trees and young growth that you can't see it until you are close onto it. Follow this clear to the top. It's pretty steep and looks as if it would lead you straight up the mountain, but it won't. It will take you to the top of a ridge, and when you get there you'll find a long easy slope down the other side to a natural pass that can't be seen from this side at all. Then all you have to do is to follow the easiest course north; on the way, of course, you will cross the railroad. Just a few miles across the line is a little village, mostly French Canucks and half-breeds. There is a good traveled trail from there to the nearest point on the river, but whether this is a part of the old Indian trail or not he doesn't know. That will be for you to find out. And he thinks,"

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concluded Spud, "that it will be just as well not to mention having seen him."

Needless to say Spud's long speech created a sensation. "Why in the dickens didn't you tell us this before?" demanded Walter.

"I didn't know it myself until late yesterday afternoon, and then I thought you'd sleep better if you didn't know it until this morning. It's my last effort at sunshine-making for the Lone Wolves," grinned Spud.

"Let's give three cheers for our sunshine-maker!" proposed Hal.

They were given with a will, Dr. Merriam and Big Jim joining in, much to Spud's confusion. Then three cheers were given for Alec Smith. When these were over Upton turned to the doctor. "I'd like to know what you think of this, sir," said he.

"I think," replied the doctor smiling, "that it is a lead worth following. You all know what the Bible says about casting your bread upon the waters. Who knows but this may prove a splendid illustration of the truth of this. Without thought of reward you have played the part of good Samaritans to the poor fellow in there, and now through him

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you may be enabled to accomplish your purpose. It looks very much as if but for this valuable information Lost Trail would have continued to remain lost for some time to come. This may not prove to be the old trail after all, but I have a feeling that it will, and I shall await with great eagerness the final report of the Lone Wolves. Now for the second time I wish this expedition Godspeed and success."

Once more the Scout grip was given all around, and then with the wolf's head banner proudly floating at their head the four Scouts headed up the Hollow toward the beaver dam to resume their search for Lost Trail. As they approached the dam a gray old beaver was discovered at work on one of the houses.

"It's an omen!" cried Hal, as with a resounding slap of his tail the old fellow disappeared in the water. "I have a hunch we are going to succeed."

Getting around on the steep north bank of the pond was no easy task, and by the time they reached the giant hemlock the boys were quite ready to believe that this had been a primary cause in the abandonment of the old

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trail. The gully was soon found and then began another hard struggle, hampered as they were by their packs. Not only was the gully steep, but it was choked with brush, and by the time they reached the top of the ridge they were panting, hot and tired. They were glad enough to call a halt for a brief rest.

Crossing the top of the ridge to a point where they could get a view to the north they encountered one of those surprising changes in topography which continually delight the traveler in hilly or mountainous country. Whereas, looking across from the south side of the beaver pond, the Hollow had appeared walled in by a high range on the north it now appeared that a long draw or valley, entirely hidden from the Hollow by the ridge, opened between the mountains forming the northern barrier. The ridge sloped gently down to this natural pass and was covered with a sparse growth of hardwood. There were evidences that it had been fire-swept in former years.

A pause was made for Plympton to make a rough sketch, and then the boys started down toward the valley. Although they watched sharply there were no evidences of

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old blazes on the trees, but this was not surprising in view of the fact that the old trail, if it had indeed led up through here, was abandoned before the present stand of trees had started. Moreover, there was no need of such guides, for whoever crossed the ridge either way would naturally choose the easiest going and the contour of the land was such that there was nothing to lead one astray. So they worked their way downward rapidly with no greater hindrance than an occasional windfall, and presently were fairly in the valley or pass. It was quite narrow at this point, but after a little opened out gradually until they were in a stretch of flat woods too dense for extended vision. Of course this meant an absence of landmarks as guides, and for the first time they were obliged to resort to the compass.

Shortly after the halt for noon lunch they encountered a good sized brook coming down from the hills to the east and bearing almost due north.

"This must be either a feeder of a lake or of a larger stream which in turn must flow into the Saint Lawrence!" exclaimed Walter.

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"As long as it flows in the right direction I guess we can't do better than follow it. What do you think, Pat?"

"Thot 'tis good wood sense ye be shpaking," returned Pat promptly. "Water in this counthry takes the easiest and shortest way, and an Injun follows a watercourse as naturally as a rabbit follows his mither's tail. If there ever was a trail through here it probably was along this shtrame."

"That's logical," replied Walter. "According to what I've read the old raiding parties stuck pretty close to water. As long as this stream flows in the right direction we'll follow it, and I guess we won't be very far off the track."

Accordingly this was done, and for the rest of the afternoon they were seldom out of sight or at least hearing of the brook save as now and again they cut across bends or made detours around swamps. Pat seemed to know intuitively when these were likely to be encountered, and little time was wasted.

They made an early camp, putting up a rough shelter on a well-drained knoll hard by a spring. It was the first camp where

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there were no evidences of man's having been there before. So far as solitude and natural conditions were concerned it might well have been the primeval forest and they the first to penetrate it. Some such thoughts as these were passing through Plympton's mind as they squatted around the evening fire.

"Ever make believe things when you were little?" he asked abruptly, breaking a long, dreamy silence.

"Sure thing," replied Hal. "If all the Indians and bears and lions I've killed were laid out we could walk back to Woodcraft on their bodies. That's half the fun of being a boy."

"I guess I know what you are thinking, Sister," said Walter. "It wouldn't be much of a tax on the imagination to make believe we are one of those old raiding parties. I guess this wilderness is pretty much as it was in those old days. For all we know some of those bloody scalp hunters may have camped on this very spot. It's quite likely that they did, for this is a natural camp ground. If these old hills we've been coming through could only talk what stories they could tell!

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If there are such things as ghosts these woods must be full of them. This has been a great trip for us, but think what it must have been to the first white man who ever penetrated the wilderness. Those were stirring old days, but I'm glad it was given me to live now instead of then. Listen to that wind soughing through the hemlocks! Sounds like the spirit of some old Indian chief sighing for the days when the land belonged to the red man and he was lord of all he surveyed. Something mighty sad about it when you think of it."

"Toime to turn in. There be no ghosts or banshees these days," broke in the practical Pat. "'Tis shlaping and not draming we should be, for 'tis work and no drame thot we have cut out for us."

Shortly after noon of the next day they entered the village Smith had told them of. It was not much of a village, and as Alec had said, the people were mostly French and half-breeds, with a few of Scotch or English descent. As luck would have it there was a French priest there, a man of considerable education, and well versed in the history of the country. He was much interested in the young visitors

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and when Walter told him what they were trying to do he was still more interested. He proved to be a veritable mine of information about that section and its history. He was brimful of quaint legends, many of them handed down by the Indians, and to the delight of the boys some of these had to do with the old trail to the American settlements. One of them in particular was the story of a successful raiding party and so accurately described the course followed that there was little question that the war party had taken the very trail to Smugglers' Hollow over which the boys had just come.

"There's no doubt about it!" exclaimed Walter jubilantly. "We've found Lost Trail, all right, and now if we can only trace it to the end, the place where they started from, we shall have succeeded in doing what we started out to do. I do hope we can! Won't it be great?"

And here the good father and his fund of historic lore proved once more of aid. He told them that the road to the nearest village on the river followed an old Indian trail, and that this fact was established beyond all

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doubt. The village was only fifteen miles distant, and the mounds of an old fortification were still to be seen there. Local history said that this was an old French outpost and fur depot for trade with the Indians, and that at one time there had been a considerable Indian village around it. He would give them a letter to the chief magistrate, with whom he was well acquainted, and with his help he had no doubt they would be able to ascertain facts which would tend to prove that during the early wars this was the base for many expeditions against the English settlements on the American side. He did his utmost to induce them to remain as his guests until the next day, and it was with some difficulty that the boys refused his hospitality without giving offense. Much as they would have liked to stay they could not give up the idea of spending one more night in the open, and it was clear that their long hike would end on the morrow.

So, expressing their hearty appreciation of the assistance which he had given them, they bade the kindly father farewell and once more turned northward, pitching their last camp a

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few miles beyond the village. An early start was made the next morning and with a good road it was a matter of but a few hours to reach their destination. Here Walter delivered the letter from the priest and the sealed message from Dr. Merriam to the chief magistrate. The latter proved to be as hospitable as the priest and insisted that the boys should be his guests as long as they remained. He showed them the ruins of the old fort and brought out some time-yellowed records of the town in which were found corroborative evidence of the truth of the story that this had once been the base of operations against the American border settlements, both in the days when France owned Canada and later when it had become English territory. This was all that was needed to convince the Lone Wolves that they had indeed reëstablished Lost Trail, and in this conclusion the magistrate agreed with them. Plympton copied the important parts of these old papers to complete his record and establish proof, and with this the boys felt that their task was practically completed. Nothing remained but to put the report in shape and send to Dr.

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Merriam, and this would be done after they reached home. An official receipt for Dr. Merriam's message was given Walter to be forwarded with the report.

That night Upton, Hal and Plympton took the train for Montreal, parting with Pat at the depot. The latter was to spend the night at the magistrate's house and start back for Smugglers' Hollow the next morning.

"Wish we were going back with you, Pat," said Walter as the two gripped hands in the clasp of Scout brotherhood. "It's been the greatest trip ever, and we owe it to you, for if you hadn't come we couldn't have. When are you going to make us that promised visit in New York?"

"When Oi get the leaves out av me hair and the Oirish out av me shpach," retorted Pat. "Good-bye to yez till nixt year."

"Till next year!" shouted the three boys as the train pulled out.

A day in Montreal, visiting the many points of interest there, and then one of the most picturesque trips on inland waters, the steamer ride through Lakes Champlain and George and from Albany down the Hudson to New

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York, brought to a glorious end the summer vacation and the now famous expedition of the Lone Wolf Patrol.

Two weeks later Upton received a bulky letter postmarked at Upper Chain, the post-office of Woodcraft Camp. It was addressed in Spud's sprawling hand, and with eager fingers Walter tore it open. It was as follows:

"*Woodcraft Camp.*

"DEAR WALT:—

"Bully for the Lone Wolves! The Big Chief got your report and he acts as chesty as I feel, and that's some, believe me! He's going to do just as he promised and forward a report to headquarters. I guess we're some Scouts—what! He thinks there's no doubt about us—I mean you fellows—having found Lost Trail. Wish I could have been with you, but I've had a bully time.

"Say, it's all right about Alec. The doctor got busy right away and found how things stood up in Canada. A week ago he got word that Black Charley had been done up in another scrap and on his death bed had confessed to the priest that he was the one who killed The Mick, just as Alec suspected. Isn't it great? I don't mean that Black Charley and The Mick were killed, but that Alec is

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cleared. He turned out to be the same one Big Jim knew in the lumber camp, and the two have been pretty chummy. Alec is a pretty decent sort after all, and is almighty grateful for what we did for him. Says he's going to get me a bear-skin this winter. Hope he won't forget it.

"His leg's doing fine. Pat and Big Jim are with him now and are going to stay until he is able to travel, and then they are going to bring him out to Woodcraft, where he's going to try to get a job with the same lumber crew Pat is with. I got another buck and Jim's tanning the hide for me. Gee, it was great up there in the woods! Pat stayed two days on his way back, so we knew before the Big Chief that you found the trail. Alec was tickled almost to death to think that he helped. Say, do you remember what you said that night about him having lost the trail? Well, that was just about the way it was. But he's found it now all right. Says if he wasn't so old he'd be a Boy Scout himself. Told him what you said. The idea seemed to please him, and he told me to write you that you fellows were not the only one that had found a lost trail and that his find was a better one than yours. Pat came in to relieve me when I had to come out. Tell Sister he's a grand little Scout, because if he hadn't had that plan all prepared when

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your Maine plan fell through we shouldn't have had all these things to think of, and I shouldn't have that lynx skin. Hasn't it all turned out bully? Hope we can do something just as big next year.

"Yours as ever,
"SPUD ELY,
"*Chief Cook and Sunshine-maker of the Lone Wolves.*"

"Good old Spud!" murmured Walter. "He sure did his share in the finding of Lost Trail."

The Stories in this Series are:

THE BOY SCOUTS OF WOODCRAFT CAMP
THE BOY SCOUTS ON SWIFT RIVER
THE BOY SCOUTS ON LOST TRAIL
THE BOY SCOUTS IN A TRAPPER'S CAMP

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THORNTON W. BURGESS

THORNTON W. BURGESS was born in Sandwich, Massachusetts, January 14, 1874. He graduated from the Sandwich High School in 1891, afterward taking a course in Comer's Commercial College, Boston. After a few years in business life he entered the editorial field as one of the editors of the Phelps Publishing and Orange Judd Companies and was for several years one of the editors of Good Housekeeping Magazine, for which he wrote extensively.

For some years he has been a contributor to many of the leading magazines. Over the name of W. B. Thornton he won recognition as a writer on out-door life and nature topics. He is an ardent lover of nature and since boyhood has spent his spare time in the woods and fields. His vacations have been spent with rod, gun and camera, camping and canoe cruising.

Among his books are:

The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp
The Boy Scouts on Swift River
The Boy Scouts on Lost Trail
The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp

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